

WHAT IS LOVE?—See page 525.

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"IF YOU WILL ONLY GIVE US TIME YOU SHALL BE PAID IN FULL," VIOLET PLEADED.

POOR LITTLE DOROTHY.

—30—

PROLOGUE.

THE scene was King's-cross Terminus; the time one broiling August day when the trains starting for the Yorkshire watering places were crowded with eager travellers; when trucks loaded with luggage met you at every turn, and you needed to be very sharp to escape collision with the same as the porters, uttering a hasty "by leave," pushed their burden in the exact direction of your frame. The huge station was alive with people, and the company was evidently doing a good day's business, when a tall, aristocratic-looking man, leading a little boy, inquired anxiously of an important-looking official when the next train for Matching started.

"That's her, sir!" was the reply as the man pointed to a short string of carriages waiting quietly in a siding; "the engine's just coming alongside, and then she'll be off in a jiffy!"

Captain Peyton had just time to get his tickets, one and a-half single, and to find an empty carriage. He lifted his boy in first and followed quickly himself. He drew a breath of relief as the train started without their privacy being disturbed, for his journey was a painful one; he had much to think over and decide in the something under an hour which the train would take to convey him to his destination, and he could not think comfortably in the presence of strangers. He was a third-class passenger (for the length of his purse did not accord with his distinguished appearance), and if Matching had been on the seaside route he would not have come off so well.

It was baking hot, and the carriage, having been closely shut up during its stay at King's-cross, the atmosphere had that terribly stuffy, fusty smell which is more trying than the most scorching sunshine. Charles Peyton flung open both the windows and put his head out of the one nearest as far as he could; but if he hoped for a fresh cool breeze he was mistaken. The

air was positively burning, and he drew back his head with a sigh.

He was a man of five-and-thirty, with a handsome face and big, honest, grey eyes; a pleasant companion, a most popular comrade in his youth, the only brother, too, of a wealthy baronet. It was a little surprising that he should be poor; but poor he was; and if the charm of his face and manner had not disarmed criticism it would have been self-evident that he was shabby; that his carefully-brushed coat had seen long service, and that its cut was very unfashionable.

Poor Peyton! as his fellow officers had once said, luck was against him all down the line. Ten years ago he had been the smartest officer in his regiment, cavalry, of course; had enjoyed a handsome allowance from his brother, whose heir presumptive he was, and was also engaged to a very wealthy heiress. Unfortunately for himself and all concerned Charles discovered that he preferred blue eyes to black ones; he had not the strength of mind to inform his *Rancie* of the change in his sentiments, and

actually never wrote to tell her of his fickleness till the day he eloped with pretty, portionless Caroline Durant.

Janet Lester was a great deal too proud to betray how much she suffered through her lover's desertion. She concealed her feelings so effectually that not even her brother-in-law, Sir Douglas Peyton, guessed the keenness of her misery.

He was angry enough without guessing. Having married Evelyn Lester (Janet's only sister) Charles's perfidy touched him sorely. He regarded it as a slight to his wife, and from the moment of the soldier's marriage not only refused to see him but cut off his allowance, leaving the wedded pair to subsist as best they could on a captain's pay.

They loved each other, these two, and made a brave struggle with poverty. Charles exchanged into an infantry regiment, where life was less expensive.

They lived in the rooms allotted them in the officers' quarters, and did their utmost to make a shilling do the work of two; but it was terribly hard, specially when the children came thick and fast, as they mostly do come to needy gentle-folks.

Evelyn Peyton lost her bloom, her husband lost the spruceness and easy-going manner all had remarked in him; but they loved each other still; and when sometimes they talked of the old days at Peyton Royal, and mourned over the harshness of Sir Douglas, they never once regretted the rash step which had linked their fortunes.

"You might have been ever so rich," Cara would say, tenderly, "you might have been ever so grand. I often wonder, Charley, you don't repent your bad bargain."

He shook his head.
"I'd rather have you than any amount of gold, darling, and shall I tell you a secret, Cara? I never really cared for Janet Lester."

"But you were engaged to her," said young Mrs. Peyton in a puzzled tone.

"But I always think I proposed to her in a moment of madness. You see, Cara, Evelyn and Douglas were so happy, staying with them gave me a rose-coloured view of matrimony; then Janet and I were very much thrown together, she was handsome, fascinating and all that. I knew all along I didn't love her, but I thought we should get on very well together, and so—"

"And she has never married?"
"Never; you see, poor little Evelyn, when she died, begged her sister to take care of Douglas and the baby. Janet has made her home at Peyton Royal ever since—its mistress in all but name."

And then, after ten years of silence, a great surprise came to the Captain and his wife. Sir Douglas Peyton was stricken down in the prime of life, and the fiat went forth that his days, nay, even his hours, were numbered.

No summons reached the Captain's rather shabby quarters; he heard of the accident (Sir Douglas had had a fall from his horse), by chance, or rather by favour of the old family doctor, who had never been able to forget that Charles Peyton was the son of one of his oldest friends, and had made a point of calling to see him from time to time on his own rather rare visits to London.

To this kind old man's view, Fate had been very cruel to Charles, the engagement with Miss Lester had been none of the Captain's seeking—Dr. Grant always declared—and it was bad enough to lose a wealthy bride without having his allowance cut off.

Then, too, after seven years of childless matrimony, Lady Peyton suddenly presented her husband with a baby, who, though of the wrong sex, could effectually keep her uncle out of Peyton Royal and ten thousand a year.

"You know," the old man declared on one of his visits to Charles, "it's perfectly dreadful to think of how rich that child will be if things don't take a turn. Peyton Royal and its revenues would be enough for one small girl, but her mother's fortune is settled on her. Miss Lester will probably leave her here, and as,

since his wife's death, Sir Douglas does not spend a quarter of his income, the savings will be enormous."

Charles and Cara looked at their own olive branches, and for the first time, perhaps, felt a touch of jealousy of their unknown niece.

And then one morning quite suddenly came a long letter from Dr. Grant containing first the news of the baronet's danger and then an urgent request that Captain Peyton would come down at once, and try to be reconciled to his brother before the end.

"Sir Douglas," wrote the kind old man, "was inordinately proud of his name; and his grand old home, he had never ceased to mourn the sex of his only child; in fact, between her being a girl and her having cost her mother's life, he had very scant affection for Dorothy. If only his forgiveness of the old wrong could be obtained, Dr. Grant believed he would far rather little Dick (the eldest of the Captain's brood) should inherit the estate than that it should pass to a stranger on Dorothy's marriage. Her mother's dowry and her father's savings would together make her very rich, while Dick would, if cut out from Peyton Royal, be in due time a pauper baronet. Anyway, the attempt was well worth making."

And now, you see, the object of Captain Peyton's journey; he was not going merely to try how much he could get for himself and his children, but he had loved Sir Douglas once very dearly, and he longed to be at peace with him while there was time; he was not a sanguine man, the years of genteel poverty had robbed him of his old hopefulness, but for all that he was glad the chance had been given him of seeing his brother's face again.

The train was an express, only stopping once or twice. They were fast nearing Matching, when Dick said suddenly,—

"I wish mother had come."

He was only nine years old, the handsomest boy in the regiment, a child of whom any father might be proud.

Charles Peyton stroked the boy's hand tenderly, but he did not re-echo the wish; as Janet Lester was the presiding spirit at Peyton Royal, no very kindly welcome would have awaited her successful rival.

"We are not going pleasuring, Dick," he said, a little gravely. "Your uncle is very ill, and we have come to see him; it is not a holiday."

"I call a day in the country and two railway journeys a first-rate holiday, father. I say, has Uncle Douglas got any boys?"

"No; only one little girl."

"Girls are no fun," said Dick, dejectedly.

"You mustn't talk about fun, my boy: I tell you your uncle is very ill."

"But I don't know him," objected Dick; "and he can't be nice, father, or he would have asked us to go and stay with him."

Peyton Royal was a good seven miles from Matching station, but Dr. Grant was waiting with his gig.

"I'll drive you as far as the lodge-gates, Captain. Thank Heaven you have come! Tomorrow would have been too late."

"So bad as that?"

"As bad as it can possibly be for him still to be alive."

There was no groom to overhear their conversation. Little Dick, wedged in between his father and the portly doctor, seemed hardly to count as a listener.

"I suppose Miss Lester is there?"

"Yes. There is a professional nurse, but Miss Lester is devoted in her attentions to Sir Douglas. No sister of his own could have done more for him."

"Poor Douglas! He's not forty, even now. You know, doctor, there's something terrible in a man's being cut off like this."

The doctor nodded.

"But Sir Douglas has never taken any pleasure in his life since his wife died. People say that men can't be faithful to the dead, but I believe if he had survived her fifty years instead of five he would still have spent them mourning."

"She died at the child's birth, didn't she?"

We were over in Ireland at the time, and I never heard any particulars."

"Not at Dorothy's birth. The baby was six weeks old when Lady Peyton died; but she had never recovered from her confinement. No one suspected any danger. I am sure I didn't. She seemed delicate and languid, but I thought a winter in the South would set her up. She started with her sister, the infant and its nurse; your brother was to follow later. Scarlet fever was raging here, and he simply would not leave his people until he had attended a great meeting for arranging a temporary hospital. He paid dearly for his philanthropy. A telegram from Miss Lester told him her sister was dangerously ill; and he only reached Nice when all was over."

"It must have been an awful shock to him."

"Terrible. As I said just now, he lost all pleasure in his life."

"But he should have thought of his child."

"She was the wrong sex, and she had indirectly cost her mother's life. He could not forgive her the double offence."

The gig stopped abruptly in a broad lane, bordered on either side by a picturesque hedge, in which honeysuckle and woodbine bloomed. Here Captain Peyton and his son alighted.

"I shall see you presently," said Dr. Grant. "We had better not arrive together."

A hundred recollections thronged Charles Peyton's brain and surged through his memory as, with Dick holding his hand, he walked up the Linden Avenue which led to the house. The boy was a little awestruck. He had been prepared for much greater prosperity than his own parents boasted, but not for grandeur such as this.

He attempted to shake hands with the butler, under the impression he must be a relative, and gripped his father's hand more closely than ever as he found the highly-polished floor most slippery walking.

The old servant looked at him with a kindly smile, and said to the Captain,—

"The very model of the family, sir. I hope," with a hesitating air, "that Mrs. Peyton is well, sir?"

"Quite well, thank you;" he gave the butler an expressive glance. "I have come to see my brother."

"Which, begging your pardon, Mr. Charles, you'll not do unless you set about it by stealth. You know his room? It's the old one. You go straight up, and I'll see to little master. It's your only chance."

"I'll take the boy with me, thanks, all the same, old friend."

Know the room! Why he could have found his way to it blindfold. The state bedchamber of Peyton Royal, where the heads of the family always slept—and died.

Why, Charles could recall being taken into that room as a little child to see his mother when illness kept her in her bed, and she wanted her boys.

He could remember sitting side by side with Douglas at the foot of the bed, and now the venerable four-poster had passed to Douglas—and he lay a-dying.

Captain Peyton spoke in a hushed whisper to the little boy when they reached the closed door.

"You wait there, Dick. You're not afraid."

"No."

There was a pathetic little air of dignity in the boy's whole bearing, but soon his lip quivered, and he added,—

"Only, father, don't be too long."

A white-capped nurse started as the door opened, and the stranger entered—was he a stranger though?

To her he seemed a younger likeness of her patient, only that the one was in the prime of his manhood, and the other lay a-dying.

She looked up quickly for instructions to a still quiet figure seated near the bed, and at that mute appeal, Janet Lester rose from her chair, and went slowly forward to meet the man she had expected to be her husband.

If she disliked his presence and would fain have kept the dying baronet to herself, she gave

no sign. Her voice was low and musical; her dark eyes met Charles Peyton's steadily, and she expressed neither surprise nor disapproval at his coming.

"Ah, Charles! You have heard our sad news then?"

"Yes; I heard it, and I felt I must see Douglas once again."

"Come nearer," she said gravely, "he is only dozing. When he wakes he will know you."

The room was so vast that it was quite a little journey from the door to the bedside. Charles accomplished it in silence, walking on tip-toe in that ultra-careful manner, which big strong men often think it their duty to employ in a sick-room.

If they only knew it this stealthy tread is most exasperating to the irritable nerves of an invalid, while if the patient is so far gone as not to feel a sense of friction at this hushed footfall why then he is too far gone to notice noise at all.

As Charles reached the bed, Sir Douglas opened his eyes, and met his brother's gaze.

"Ah, Charles."

It was Janet Lester's own expression, and, like her, the baronet did not seem surprised.

"I couldn't stay away," said the soldier, gently. "Douglas, they say you've got your marching orders from your Heavenly Captain. Don't start without forgiving me!"

Sir Douglas did not refuse the olive branch. Indeed, he essayed to put his fast chilling hand into that warm, loving grip.

"I forgave you long ago," he answered simply. "When I lost my wife and learned what sorrow was, I had no room in my heart for anger."

Janet Lester stole noiselessly from the room; the nurse followed her, and the two brothers were left alone.

"If you loved your Caroline as I loved my wife, you were right not to give her up," said Sir Douglas slowly. "I see it all now, Charles; if Janet had not been my Evelyn's sister I should have felt differently."

"I behaved atrociously to Miss Lester," confessed the Captain; "but I loved Caroline at first sight, and I could not give her up."

"And you have children?"

"Five. I brought the eldest boy with me; he's nine years old, and the model of what you were long ago."

"I'm glad the old name won't be extinct," said Sir Douglas sadly, "mine's a girl, you know, only a girl, though she cost me dear."

Charles Peyton never knew how he got the rest of his petition out, but he managed somehow.

He asked nothing for himself, but he told Sir Douglas a little of the struggle he had had to make both ends meet, of his utter inability to provide Dick with a proper education.

"His mother teaches him, but he's getting old enough for school. If he lives he'll be Sir Richard Peyton one of these days, and he will have had no education worth speaking of. He'll have to take a city clerkship, poor boy, if he can get it, it's all he'll be fit for."

"What do you want me to do?" asked Sir Douglas.

"Your child will be an heiress three times over, but she can never be the head of the family. Douglas, leave the old homestead to my Dick, and just sufficient money to keep it up with. Dorothy will even then be a very rich woman."

"I can't do that. She's Evelyn's child, and her home must be here. I swore long ago that you should never touch a penny of my wealth, but there's nothing to prevent my providing for Dick. I'll send for Carter and make a codicil to my will. Fifty thousand pounds will make things easy for the boy."

At his request Charles Peyton rang the bell. The soldier was not a mercenary man, but his struggle was a keen one; and the thought of this money filled him with thankfulness. It would mean the use of two thousand a-year till Dick came of age, in twelve years' time, when the children would be grown up and he would have advanced in his career. No more pinching, no

more dunn. Douglas had forgiven, and his last act would prove it.

Janet Lester came in hastily at the summons, almost before the bell had ceased to vibrate she stood by the bedside.

"Did you want your cordial, Douglas?"

"I want you to send for Carter. Tell Andrews to take the dogcart and bring him back at once—at once, Janet, or he will be too late."

Miss Lester went to give the order. She showed not the least vexation, though she must have guessed why the lawyer was sent for.

Perhaps she had forgiven Charles Peyton for that wrong of long ago, or else she knew by experience the trials which beset an heiress, and was thankful a portion of the golden burden should be lifted from little Dorothy's childish shoulders.

Sir Douglas seemed to revive a little, and his brother fetched Dick to present to his uncle. The dying man looked with pride on the bright, handsome boy.

"He is just like you, Charles, a Peyton through and through! You have come off better than I have after all."

And the sadness of the tone told how deeply he had longed for a son.

"Charles had better go downstairs and have some lunch," suggested Miss Lester. "Mr. Carter can't be here for an hour, and you will grow tired, Douglas; besides, the little boy must be hungry."

She went downstairs with them herself and did the honours as cordially as though they had been invited guests.

Captain Peyton felt bewildered; he knew something of Janet Lester's nature, and he would have said she would never have forgiven him or taken his hand in friendship.

The position would have been terribly embarrassing but for Dick, who chattered away cheerfully with childish unconsciousness of the shadow which hung over the house.

Miss Lester was most kind and hospitable to the little boy, taking such an apparent interest in him that the Captain was reminded of his own shortcomings, and inquired for his niece.

"Dorothy is perfectly well. Unlike the generality of only children, she is as strong as possible; she has never ailed anything in her life."

"I should like to see her," said the Captain.

"I suppose she is too young to lunch with us!"

"Dorothy never comes downstairs. Douglas is not fond of children, and it fidgets him to have her about."

Poor little heiress! Perhaps, after all, the five merry children in the officers' quarters at Seaton had the best of it.

They were still at lunch when the sudden pealing of a loud bell made Janet Lester start to her feet.

"That is the way nurse always rings when she wants me. Douglas must be worse."

She rushed upstairs, followed by Charles. Dick would have liked to go with his father, but Gibson, the butler, pressed some big purple grapes on his attention, and so kept him at the table.

It was Janet who reached the sick-room first. It was just as she had feared. The late scene had been too much for the dying man. A collapse had come on and he was utterly unconscious.

Dr. Grant, who arrived opportunely at that moment, shook his head and doubted if Sir Douglas would regain consciousness.

The lawyer came and waited below on the chance of the Baronet being able to attend to him.

Janet and Captain Peyton watched by the bedside with breathless anxiety. Charles could not forget, even in his distress at his brother's state, that five minutes' rally would enable Sir Douglas to redeem his promise.

If those still eyes never opened again on this life little Dick had no hope of the fortune so nearly his.

At last it came. The change they had longed for.

Sir Douglas moved slightly, swallowed some of

the cordial the nurse held to his lips, and managed to speak a few words.

"Be good to Dorothy," he said, brokenly, to his sister-in-law. "Make her happy, it was not her fault."

And then his head fell back. The needy Captain in the 104th regiment was Sir Charles Peyton, and little Dick was heir to an empty title.

To do Miss Lester justice she was kindness itself both to Dick and his father. She begged them to remain at Peyton Royal at least until after the funeral, and when Charles explained that this was impossible, owing to professional duties, she ordered the carriage to take them to the station and carried Dick away with her, while his father sought the interview with Mr. Carter, which, after all, was but a forlorn hope.

He told the lawyer everything. How his brother had promised to leave Dick fifty thousand pounds, and had sent for Mr. Carter on purpose to make the codicil to his will.

"My dear sir," cried the cheery little lawyer, "why in the world didn't you write it out yourself? Two of the servants could have witnessed it. It was fatal to delay in his state."

"I never thought of that, Carter; he had quite made up his mind. Don't you think his wishes would be binding?"

"I suppose there were witnesses of the promise. Miss Lester is sole executrix. If she heard your brother state his intentions she may be willing to carry them out. She is so rich that even in the unlikely event of Dorothy Peyton disclaiming the legacy when she comes of age it would be a nothing to her."

"But Miss Lester did not hear poor Douglas; he and I were alone."

"The nurse?"

"She had left us together."

"And Sir Douglas said nothing of his intention later?"

"He asked his sister-in-law to send for you."

Mr. Carter shook his head dejectedly.

"My dear sir, you haven't the ghost of a chance. The whole world knows that up to the time of his illness Sir Douglas was on bad terms with you. Who would be likely to believe he meant to leave a handsome legacy to your son?"

"I am not a liar," began Charles hotly.

"Of course not; but in such a case it would be only by favour you gained the legacy, even if the codicil had been drawn up and left unsigned, as it is, with nothing to support your testimony, people would laugh at your attempting to obtain it."

"Then I am probably the poorest baronet in the United Kingdom," said Sir Charles bitterly. "My boy will be a pauper."

"Pardon me, there is no certainty of that. Sir Douglas made his will very soon after his wife's death, and I may mention the chief points in it now, as you say you cannot be here for the funeral. He leaves everything he has, money, lands, jewels, to his only child, and he appoints Miss Lester her sole guardian; but if Dorothy dies unmarried before the age of twenty-five, or dies childless at any age, the estate, its revenues, plate furniture, and jewels, pass to your eldest son, to be entailed on him and his male heirs for ever."

Sir Charles shook his head.

"I shall never tell Dick of the chance. If it's ill work waiting for dead men's shoes it must be ten times worse waiting for a child's; besides, it seems to me that poor little creature has a sorry life of it in spite of her wealth."

"She is one of the sweetest children I ever saw," said Mr. Carter; "but her father neglected her utterly, her aunt goes a step farther and detests her."

When Sir Charles told this to his wife her soft blue eyes filled with tears.

"Poor little girl—poor little Dorothy!"

"I wish Douglas had left her to us," said the new baronet; "but I suppose Janet Lester has the best claim."

"And I should not like the charge of Dorothy," said Carr Peyton, very gravely. "Don't look so

surprised, Charley. For some things I should love to have her here, poor, lonely, little child; but, don't you see, people would never forget that my boy would be enriched by her death! If any childish illness, any accident cut her off, the world would always think we neglected her to secure her inheritance for Dick."

"Perhaps they would," agreed her husband. "Cara, I have another problem for you. What are we to do?"

"Stay here, of course!"

"I meant about the title. Can't we drop it? I am sure you are not ambitious. And if we suddenly blossom out as Sir Charles and Lady Peyton all our tradespeople will raise their prices; and everyone to whom we owe anything will send in their bill and expect prompt payment."

"What an idea. We'll remain Captain and Mrs. Peyton to the end; but Charles, isn't it a good thing no one knew where you went yesterday, and that no one in the regiment has a suspicion this impecunious family possess 'high connections'! No one will identify us with the new Sir Charles Peyton."

"They'll read it in the papers, worse luck," said Charles, gloomily. "Cara, I am not often covetous, but to-day when I saw that beautiful old house things seemed a trifle hard. Why, it would be paradise to our children just to play in the grounds. The fruit on the lunch table yesterday cost more than all our food for a day, and—"

"And you envied little Dorothy," she said, softly. "Don't do that, dear. We have been very happy in spite of our poverty, and we shall be so again when we have got over the first shock of our disappointment. Shall you go to the funeral?"

"I said not; but after all I think I must make an effort. It is the last thing I can ever do for Douglas, poor fellow!"

So he went (this time Dick was left at home), looking his best and handsomest in his deep mourning, and bearing his title with a quiet dignity, from which no one would have suspected that he never intended to use it after to-day, and was thinking of exchanging into another regiment where his fellow-officers might not discover he was a baronet.

It was a very grand funeral. Sir Douglas had led a blameless life, and without being popular, he had been respected far and near. A goodly number of people of all ranks followed him to the grave; but very few returned to Peyton Royal to listen to his will, which was read in the great library, where Miss Lester joined them, leading by the hand her little niece.

And to her uncle's mind Dorothy was the saddest sight he had ever seen, looking more like a baby of three than a child who has passed her fifth birthday. A tiny mite of a creature, with short chestnut hair curling in soft silky rings over her pretty head, big velvety brown, eyes fringed with large clustering lashes, a rosebud of a mouth, and dimpled cheeks. "A beautiful child!" every one round Matching pronounced Dorothy, and she deserved the praise; but it troubled her uncle to see that there was no tenderness in the clasp of her aunt's hand, and that the little creature looked frightened at the very sound of Miss Lester's voice, and when released from her clasp, escaped as soon as possible to Dr. Grant's side, where, with one little hand in his, she stood quite contentedly all through the reading of the will.

Charles Peyton exchanged a few weeks later, and as his title was unknown in his new regiment he and his wife at times well-nigh forgot they had a right to a prefix to their name. They spent many happy uneventful years till two great surprises suddenly befell them, coming, too, so close together as to make quite a sensation. First of all, Caroline's uncle, of whom she had not heard since her childhood, died and left his niece a small country house and twenty thousand pounds. Then their daughter, Kathleen, who in age came third in the family, won the affection of a very rich man, who was content to take her without a penny of fortune, only being (as a man of rather humble origin) undeniably proud of birth, he wished to inform his relations and friends

that his bride was the daughter of Sir Charles Peyton.

Sir Charles was a major now, and had often longed to retire from the army. His wife's legacy made that possible, so very soon after Kathleen's engagement he sent in his papers, and the family removed to King's Aston, a picturesque village in Hertfordshire, where, though still very poor for their position, they could be known by their true style, and people who remembered the days when Peyton Royal had been noted for its lavish hospitality, and recalled Charles as a young man, were very pleased to welcome him and his wife to settle among them.

CHAPTER I.

SOMEWHERE in the south-east of London is a quaint, rather picturesque, old suburb, which seems somehow to have been half forgotten in the flight of time.

Within a (longish) walk of London Bridge it boasts, of course, the usual conveniences of omnibus and tramcar. There is a railway station—only one—called by its name; but if you once get beyond the precincts of the station, out of the roads patronised by the tram and 'bus, it comes about that you find yourself in a strangely old-world region. The modern speculative builder has passed it by. The houses are tall and substantial, with old carved staircases and mantelpieces, which would not disgrace a mansion. In days past, say a hundred years ago, these houses were the abode of merchant princes. They have come down in the world now, poor things, and are mostly let out in floors, sometimes in tenements, but even so they are more attractive to my idea than the spick and span new band-boxes—all exactly alike, and mostly constructed in rows of a hundred or so—which have arisen like the locusts in most of our nearer suburbs.

A broad thoroughfare leading from a quiet road of private houses down to the river rejoiced in the name of Triton-street. It was remarkable even in that old world region for its antiquity. Perhaps when Oakley did a large shipping trade, and was famous for docks, Triton-street may have been thronged with busy passers-by, but now a days it is well-nigh deserted, and hardly anyone goes down it unless they have business at one of the dozen or so tall houses which it contains.

It was a broiling August day, much such another day as the one on which Charles Peyton had travelled to his brother's deathbed, but time had gone on since then, and the world was fifteen years older.

A slight, delicate-looking girl alighted from the tramway as it passed down the main road of Oakley, and looked anxiously to the right and left, as though uncertain which path to take.

At last she turned into a baker's shop, and asked the way to Triton-street. The directions were rather complicated but by dint of following them carefully and inquiring again and again she turned at last into the broad open road.

"What a nice-looking street," she said to herself, an opinion she changed when she found that most of the houses had been converted to business purposes, and were not above advertising their respective trades by exhibiting printed cards in the windows, such as "Mangling done here," "Repairs neatly executed," and so on.

Violet Nairn sighed heavily when at last she came to No. 10, Triton-street; it seemed utterly impossible that her errand could be here, for the house had fallen even lower than its fellows; the ground floor being occupied by a wardrobe dealer, which in homelier English might be written rag and bone shop, the windows above grimy with the dust and dirt of years, yet on them in prominent letters she could still read the announcement "Mr. Nathan, Private Loan Office," so after a momentary hesitation she passed through the door (which stood open) and mounted the old carved staircase, her heart beating violently, and a strange feeling akin to fear threatening to conquer her.

For Violet Nairn was not a philanthropist come to Oakley to preach and minister to its in-

habitants, still less was she a lady journalist in search of "copy"; there was nothing of the 'New Woman' about her. She was just the daughter of a gentleman of narrow, painfully narrow, means, the comfort and prop of her mother, and the mainstay of half a dozen small brothers and sisters.

The Nairns lived at Brixton, which has nothing in common with Oakley, except that they are both south of London Bridge.

Until less than a year before they had never even heard of the region Violet was visiting to-day; then in an evil hour Mr. Nairn saw an advertisement offering "Loans on easy terms." Like many another struggling professional man before him he believed his troubles *must* soon vanish, and if he could only secure an immediate advance for pressing need, it would be easy enough to repay it in the future.

So he answered the advertisement, and subsequently met Mr. Nathan by appointment in the City. Finally eighty pounds was advanced by the money lender on the understanding Mr. Nairn should give a bill of sale on his furniture, and that the loan was repaid by four quarterly instalments of twenty-five pounds each, which meant that he would be repaying the principal and a quarter as much again by way of interest.

The first two instalments were sent punctually but the third was already a week overdue, for sickness had fallen on the little house at Brixton, and after weeks of illness Mr. Nairn was still too weak to earn a penny. Already threatening letters had begun to arrive from the money-lender, and Violet's errand this afternoon was to beg for an extension of time.

There was no one else to plead with Mr. Nairn. Mrs. Nairn could not leave her husband: the eldest boy was a sailor and thousands of miles away; a cripple of fifteen came next; the others were only children; so reluctant as they were to send their pretty daughter on such an errand the poor parents could not help it. They had no idea of the sort of place it was either, for all Mr. Nairn's interviews had been held at a City office, where the money-lender attended twice a week to receive clients; but his letters had been so alarming the Nairns simply dared not wait till one of his days for being in the City came round, and so resolved to send Violet to the place from which he wrote.

She knocked nervously at the door with her knuckles, and a gruff voice said,—

"Come in."

She had not expected much, for Mr. Nairn had admitted from the first "Nathan was a queer customer," but she felt a strange loathing for the repulsive looking man, with his grizzly hair and beard; his shabby dirty clothes, his hawk-like eye and shrivelled parchment like skin. But the thought of those she had left at home gave her fresh courage, and she explained her business to Mr. Nathan with a quiet self-possession which surprised him.

"If you will only give us time you shall be paid in full," she pleaded, "indeed you may trust my father; but for his illness the money would have been ready to the day."

(To be continued.)

PUNCTUALITY.—A well ordered home must have its fixed hours and minutes, known to all the inmates, and arranged for by them all. The breakfast—which is nominally at eight—can easily glide by degrees to a quarter-past, half-past, and even nine. An uncomfortable frame of mind in the morning is a bad preparation for the day's petty duties and little irritations. Unconscious looks and words, hasty movements, disregard of the small proprieties of life, a selfish-looking care of Number One—justified, it seems, by the necessities of the case—these are among the results. And the want of method cultivated in the one particular runs on into all the details of life. There are persons late at dinner, late at the steamer, late at the church, and who would be late, judging from precedents, at their own wedding, not to say funeral, if others did not take them in hand.

THE MISTRESS OF BARRONS COURT.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"ROSALIND, my dear!"

"Yes, grannie!"

"Do you know that you were whistling?"

"Was I! I am a mass of iniquity, I know, but when my hands are full my brains are very apt to go wool-gathering. Where do you think I was just then, grannie, dear?"

"I haven't the least idea; not in your own drawing-room, I should imagine!"

And Lady St. Quentin shook her head and tried to look a reproof at the lovely girl, who was sitting at a table a little way off surrounded by a perfect chaos of work of all sorts.

Garments of all sizes, and in all stages of completion, lay about her, and her white fingers were moving quickly to the music of her own voice.

She looked up with a merry smile as her grandmother addressed her, and showed a pair of splendid eyes, and a face that betokened great intellect, and much strength of will into the bargain.

She was not strictly beautiful, this youthful mistress of the lordly domain of Barrons Court, but without absolute beauty of feature, everybody spoke of Rosalind St. Quentin as "lovely." She was lovely. It was the word that fitted her better than any other.

There was a winning charm about her, and a lithe grace in her every movement, that made all men rave about her, and all women—even the most envious—admire her.

Here was the sort of witchery that, in olden times, made men go contented to their death, satisfied with a word or a look from the woman who had fascinated them. And perhaps the greatest charm of all in her sweet nature was the utter absence of anything like consciousness of her power.

Even her grandmother, Lady St. Quentin—a courtly dame of the old school, who was horrified at the strides of modern times, and the latitude allowed to young ladies now that the world had turned round once more—was conquered by Rosalind's open, generous nature, and forgot to say very often that she was shocked, or astonished, or grieved at her granddaughter's very unorthodox proceedings.

Rosalind was of age. With culpable carelessness, Lady St. Quentin thought, her father had given her the property at eighteen; declaring, during his last illness, that his little girl had more brains in her head than many a man of fifty; and almost quarrelled with his mother-in-law—whom he respected and revered as if she had been his own—because she suggested that it would be putting too much on such young shoulders to leave Barrons Court and its revenues unconditionally to her grandchild.

It had not been too much, apparently. Rosalind Ormsby was no commonplace girl; she had elected to live on at her old home when her father died—though her grandmother suggested that she should let it and reside with her in London; and she had taken a certain Miss Vereker, a distant cousin of her father, to live with her and be her companion and adviser.

Not that Barbara Vereker could have given anyone much advice if it had been wanted, she was one of the meekest and mildest of created beings.

A little colourless old woman, never daring to have an opinion of her own about anything; and, though very undemonstrative, sincerely grateful for the home thus providentially provided for her.

She had been a help and comfort to Rosalind's mother during her last illness, and Mr. Ormsby, recognising her quiet merit, had asked her to stay with his orphan girl when she was left alone.

Lady St. Quentin had been inclined to resent the introduction of this elderly spinster into the

Barrons Court household; but she had come to understand Miss Vereker's worth, and to appreciate her as her granddaughter did.

She appealed to her now, as she sat in her corner busied with some interminable knitting—apparently of the same class as the frocks and tippets that surrounded the young heiress.

"Don't you think it is a dreadful habit of Rosie's, Miss Vereker?"

"I am afraid to admit that would be to confirm it," she said, gently, with a smile at the bright young face that was turned to them both. "I only hope Rosie will never do it anywhere where it cannot be apologised or accounted for."

"In church, for instance," Miss Ormsby said, with a mischievous look, "it would have a novel and exhilarating effect. We should never come to the sermon, I am afraid; and the children, who stand in such awe of me now, would laugh for the rest of their natural lives. Ah, don't look cross, grannie, dear. I wasn't here at all when I whistled just now, I was in the ten-acre field with that moonfaced boy of Betty Higgins's. He's just the best whistler and the cleverest insect catcher I ever saw. He's fit for nothing else; but he can take a butterfly and never damage a feather of its down."

"The ten-acre field! My dear child, you talk just like a farmer. What do you know about fields?"

"Not nearly as much as I ought to," the girl replied. "A farmer! I am a farmer. I am going to farm all the home land, with that handsome Mr. Armytage for my prime minister."

"My dear, do be careful what you say," Lady St. Quentin said, trying with all her might to look as if she were not horrified at her grandchild's words. "Young ladies don't farm. And do put some of those horrid things away. Here's Rupert coming, I do believe; and don't whistle while he is here. Men have such a horror of anything unfeminine!"

"I'll be on my very best behaviour," the girl replied. "I'll put away my work—because I have done it; and I won't whistle the tiniest little bar." And as if to show that she meant to keep her word, she broke out into a song. The sweetest, blithest voice in the world had Rosalind Ormsby. Her mother had had the Heaven-sent gift before her, and it had come down to her child.

"Love me little, love me long,
Is the burden of my song;
Love that is too hot and strong,
Runneth soon to waste."

"What a horrible, cold-hearted idea, Rosie!" and a young man dashed in through the open window as she spoke, startling the three ladies out of their quiet talk. "How can love be too hot!"

"I'm not responsible for the author's ideas; the air is pretty, and papa used to like it."

She looked up into his face with her pretty eyes as she spoke, and he bent his head and kissed her. They were going to be married some day, so there was no impropriety in the caress; and Rosalind could hardly analyse the feelings that made her blush rosy-red at the touch of his lips, and wish that he had not done it. He had kissed her often before; and she loved him very much, of course. He was the husband of her own choice; she had said yes to him of her own free will, but very much to her grandmother's delight, who would have schemed to bring the marriage about somehow if the young people had not settled it for themselves. Rupert was too handsome to do without money, she had been wont to say, and except for what she managed to give him out of her jointure, Rupert St. Quentin—now by his father's death Lord St. Quentin—was very poor indeed.

He had his title now, but it was almost an empty honour. He was as poor as a man could well be, and, urged by his grandmother, and prompted by honest admiration for Rosalind as well, he had proposed to his cousin and been accepted. The marriage was not to be just yet—that was understood. Rosalind wanted her freedom a little longer; she had divers plans of her own that she wanted to carry out at Barrons Court before she gave up the reins of govern-

ment to her husband. She was not afraid of very much opposition from Rupert, but she knew that he held some of her ideas about the improvement of poor people's houses, and matters of that sort, as Quixotic and extravagant, and she did not want them interfered with.

"You are always up to your eyebrows in drapery of some sort," he said, poking at a pile of little garments with his cane. "Why, what in the name of all that's ugly is this thing?"

"Don't be rude, sir; put it down!" Rosalind said, laughing, and blushing again. "It's a petticoat for the baby at the lodge. I was just putting it all away. It's just about done. There's going to be a distribution of it on Monday. You must come and help me."

"Come and hand petticoats to old women? No, thank you," the young man said. "I am afraid I have an appointment for Monday. Can't you get the curate?"

"Certainly, we can get the curate," Rosalind said; "he will have to come if we want him. But that won't be like having you there. You need not touch an article if you don't like, nor come near an old woman; but they would feel honoured, poor things, by a look from you—their future master, Rupert."

"Yes, of course. It is very nice of them, and all that," said the young man, confusedly; "but, you see, I have an engagement, 'pon my honour I have, and I wanted you to come with me; but I suppose the old women and the petticoats will be of more importance."

"Well, yes," Miss Ormsby said, gravely, "they will. Don't you see, Rupert, it is a treat to them. It has been promised for a long time, and the day fixed. They cannot take any day for amusement as you and I can."

"If you please, miss, Mr. Armytage is in the library. He says you appointed to see him there at one o'clock."

"So I did," said Rosalind, rising hastily. "It's about those cottages down by the mill-pond. We have quite decided to rebuild them, and Mr. Armytage has brought the plans, I expect. Come with me, Rupert, and see them. Perhaps you can suggest something that we have not thought of."

"Thanks; no, I'd rather not," the young man said, indolently—Rupert St. Quentin was nothing if not indolent—and stroking his soft, brown moustache. "I've no head for plans, and all that sort of thing. I should only make a muddle of any suggestions I might make. I should lead the builders to putting the cellars in the roofs and the drawing-room underground, or something equally horrible. Excuse me, there's a dear, Rosie, and make haste back."

"There are not to be any cellars," Rosalind said; "and there are not likely to be drawing-rooms in cottages. Don't be lazy, sir! I am ashamed of you!"

"I'm awfully sorry," Rupert St. Quentin said, going up to the piano and running his white fingers over the keys. He was proud of his essentially feminine hand, and liked to show it off in the undulating movement of the keys of a piano in a desultory fashion. He was not altogether an effeminate man, but there was very little about him of the manly brusquerie that generally fascinates girls; and most people wondered how Rosalind, with her bright intellect and frank, unaffected warm-heartedness, could have chosen one so entirely her opposite in every respect.

He annoyed her sometimes by his want of sympathy in her plans and the work she loved so well. He did not seem to care for Barrons Court at all, she thought, and there was the least suspicion of asperity in her tone as she answered him now.

"Don't blame me if the cottages are not to your liking when they are done," she said; "nor Mr. Armytage either. Remember, we would have taken you into our counsel and you would not come."

"I am sure I shall not blame you," Rupert answered, still letting his fingers wander idly over the keys, and admiring the gleam of a favourite ring he was wearing. "You are—"

mistress, dear, and do as you like; Armytage is only your servant. I should never think of him in the matter. Come back soon, Rosie; I have a new song for you."

"I shall finish my business first," Miss Ormsby said, and left the room with somewhat what Miss Vereker was apt to call "a snap,"—the nearest approach to temper she ever showed.

"Rupert, you are a fool!"

The words came so suddenly from Lady St. Quentin's lips that her grandson stopped his lazy performance, and twisted himself round on the music stool to look at her.

"Is that a new discovery, grannie?" he asked.

"No!"

"Then why your opinion just at this moment?"

"Because you provoke me to it—because I can see that every day of your life you are alienating Rosalind's heart from you. You take no interest in her pursuits."

"Not in old women and their flannel petticoats. You are right there, grannie!"

"Don't be coarse, sir; nor in anything else. You ought to interest yourself in her plans and charities, and—"

"Oh, spare me the list of my enormities. I can't do it, grannie. Rosie has brains for both of us in that pretty head of hers. She does not really want me; and I was never intended by nature for either an architect or a surveyor. I shall be quite content to be prince-consort."

"I am ashamed to hear you say so. Rosie won't love you any the better for such idleness and folly."

"Why should I be anything else? The people believe in her, and she will make the bonniest queen that ever ruled. She has a prime minister, and—"

"And you are content to let the world go by you, while you dawdle through it, looking at yourself in the glass, and letting your future wife spend her mornings with her steward, and her evenings working, like a whole Dorcas society rolled into one, at gowns and petticoats for her poor. Why, even the labourers on the place make a laughing stock of you, and prophesy that Rosie will be mistress and master too when you are married. Why, they would rather have Norman Armytage for a master than you. He has some manliness and good sense in him."

Lady St. Quentin loved her grandson very dearly, though she deplored his faults, and strove with all her might to amend them.

Her son, Rupert's father, had been a source of trouble to her all his life.

Early left fatherless, he had worn out his mother's patience and her purse in college days, and had only retrieved himself on the very brink of ruin by marrying a wealthy manufacturer's daughter, whose money only helped him to fresh extravagances.

For many years of his life he had been a broken-down invalid, soured and miserable, and when his wife died he had summoned his mother to live with him, and take care of him and his son.

She had done so faithfully and well till he died and was laid beside his wife in the family vault.

There was nothing left for his son; the estates were mortgaged, and the house was let; and but for Lady St. Quentin's generosity, her grandson, with an old title and an unbroken descent from the Norman marauders, would have been an absolute pauper.

CHAPTER II.

NORMAN ARMYTAGE sat in the library at Barrons Court, waiting for the young mistress of the mansion, and thinking, as he looked out of the window on to as fair a prospect as any in all England.

The steward, Lady St. Quentin, had called him, but there was nothing of the servant or dependant in the handsome young face that was

turned to the waving tree and glowing flowers outside.

It was a truly patrician face, and the whole bearing and manner of the man were those of a gentleman.

His father was the steward. Stanley Armytage had been steward of the Barrons Court property for more years than his son could remember.

He was born to no better station.

He came of a long line of sturdy yeomen who had served and prospered in their service, and farmed and lived honourable and useful lives without dreaming of soaring above their station in any way.

But the mother of Norman Armytage was of a different stamp—the daughter of an impecunious gentleman with the blood of the Howards in her veins, and all the pride of race that is apt to go with long descent.

She had preferred comfort and independence, with a good-natured and warm-hearted husband, to semi-starvation and the coldly-given charity of her father's aristocratic relatives.

She was an outcast and an alien from the time of her marriage—a creature to be spoken of only with shuddering horror and uplifted hands—but she managed to live a very happy life, and to die regretted, as only loving wives and mothers are regretted, by her husband and her only child.

It was from her that the boy inherited all his innate refinement. He was like her in person and character; and he had all his father's good qualities as well.

He was open, honest, and truthful; he scorned a lie, and was fearless and outspoken, and he was as handsome as he was good.

His father idolized him and resolved to make him something more than he had been himself.

In his heart he resolved that his son should be a gentleman, and show his haughty relations what a steward's son could be made.

He knew nothing of them, he held no communication with his wife's kindred; beyond letting them know when she died, he took no notice of them, and Norman grew up almost in ignorance of their existence.

He was sent to a good school, and the elder Mr. Armytage would have supplemented the good begun there by sending him to college as well; but the lad himself, with great good sense, as everyone thought who knew the circumstances, negated the proposal, and begged to be allowed to begin at once to earn his own living.

He shrank a little, though he did not tell his father as much, from the thought of mixing on unequal terms with the sons of gentlemen, and he had already, boy as he was, mapped out for himself a career that he was ambitious to follow; so, instead of going to Oxford, he went into the office of a London firm of accountants, and made a start in life which promised very fairly, for he was industrious and painstaking, and speedily won the approval and goodwill of his employers. But—

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men,
Gang aft a-gley,"

as Burns has it, and Norman Armytage had his scheme of life shattered to the winds by the sudden illness of his father.

A paralytic seizure prostrated Mr. Armytage, senior, only a month or two after the death of Mr. Ormsby, and Norman was sent for to fill his place.

"Only till I am better, my boy," the old man had said, when he begged his son to stay. But that day had never come; he had remained in the same helpless state, clear enough mentally, but physically prostrate, and Norman had stayed on and done the work for him as cleverly as he would have done it himself.

It had gone against the grain, especially when he found that the sole right to order and administer was vested in a young girl hardly out of her teens; but he had been astonished at her clear-headedness and the bright fashion in which she grasped every detail of the management of the estate, and he had come to work with and for

her with a will, and to enter with all his heart into her schemes for the improvement of her people's position and the well-being of everyone about her.

He was in a dreamy mood this morning, the plans for the cottages lay under his hand, and he was thinking.

The position had been fraught with danger for him and the peril had come; the sweet fascination of Rosalind Ormsby's nature had conquered him, and his heart was in her keeping to do with it what she would had she but known it.

He had fought with the fascination, battled with it as honest men will battle with anything that is not right, but it had been too strong for him.

He was fighting with it now as he waited for her in the old library, almost curing the day that had brought him within the reach of her witchery.

"Fool that I am!" he said to himself. "Blind, idiotic fool! I that thought myself so brave and cold-blooded when first I saw her golden head bending over dusty papers, and despised her for what I thought an affected interest in matters for which ladies generally care nothing. And now—ah, my darling! my darling! I would lay down my life for one hour of happiness and love with you, for one word of love from your sweet lips."

He crushed the papers he held in his hand with a nervous grip, and paced the room for a minute like a caged animal.

"I must give it up," he muttered; "I cannot stand the strain. I shall forget myself, and some day, when she looks up into my face with her sweet unconscious eyes and asks me a question, I shall throw my manhood and my honour to the winds, and claim her for my own in madness and misery unutterable! I ought never to have come here. I should have helped the old man in some other way; he told me that her future husband would be here a great deal, and that he would assist her in all the business of the estate. Did he know, I wonder, what an idiot is to reign here at Barrons Court—what a mass of conceit and self-importance is to lord it over his master's daughter, and spend the revenues of the old place as his father before him spent everything he could lay his hands on? And if that were all, if there were nothing else—if that bejewelled ape she has chosen for her husband were only an honourable man. If I were to tell her what I know—if—have a care, Norman Armytage, don't let the walls hear what you suspect, what you know, things will right themselves maybe; but it must not be by your handiwork. Remember, you are only the steward—the servant waiting your mistress's pleasure. Who is it that says that 'Love levels all ranks'! He lied; there can be no levelling to bring me nearer her!"

"Rehearsing a charade, Mr. Armytage!"

He started guiltily; he had not heard the door open, nor Rosalind's light footstep enter the room. How much had she heard! How much had he spoken aloud? How many of us would give something to have that question solved when we are caught self-communing! He need not have been afraid. Rosalind had heard nothing except a few muttered words, and she was amused at the look of perplexed horror in his face at being discovered talking to himself. She little guessed what had been the subject of that solitary talk!

"I beg your pardon," he said, recovering himself at once, and placing a chair for her to sit at the table. "I am afraid I have a habit of talking to myself. I have lived a good deal alone in town, and the trick has grown upon me. I hope I did not ask you to come to me at an inconvenient time! Havard wants these plans as soon as possible, and I think it would be expedient to let him have them, or we may have to wait some time before the work is done, and I don't think we could get a better man."

He had recovered his scattered wits during his speech, and faced her now as calm and self-possessed as if he had never indulged in a wild day-dream in his life.

"It is I who have to beg your pardon, Mr. Armytage," Rosalind said, with a slight bend of her head, and a smile that very nearly sent

him off into a trance again. "I kept you waiting."

"Hardly a moment."

"Oh, yes, I did; and your time is precious. But I had to put my work away; and then Rupert—that is, Lord St. Quentin—came in, and I was trying to persuade him to come with me and see about the cottages; and it ended in my coming in a hurry, after all. I found it rather waste of breath."

"Lord St. Quentin dislikes the dry details of business, I find," Norman Armystage said quietly.

"He dislikes business in every way," Rosalind replied, hastily; and then feeling that perhaps she was seeming to put her betrothed husband at a disadvantage by her words she added, hurriedly, "He and I were brought up so differently, you know. His father never paid any attention to such things. Mine did."

"And the result is evident," the young man said. "You have Barrons Court, and—"

"And my cousin has nothing, of course. That is only carrying out the words of the commandment, and making the children suffer for the sins of their fathers. My cousin is not to blame. The estate was mortgaged before he was born, and he has not been fairly dealt with since. I wonder if you can help me to set it right."

"I would help you to anything in the world that I could, Miss Ormsby."

She looked up hastily at the words. There was something in their tone that startled her; but Norman Armystage had recollected himself just in time, and was looking at her with a calm business-like face that put her suspicions to the blush.

"I must be an idiot," she said to herself. "He only made me an ordinary answer, and yet—Rosalind Ormsby, you are a fool, only fit for a lunatic asylum."

She gave herself a little shake mentally, and answered him as quietly as if she had not seen or suspected anything.

"Thank you. I hardly know what I want, nor how to set about it. I can talk to the lawyers, of course; but I should like to have an idea what I was going to say to them before I did so. You see, papa—perhaps I ought to speak of it; my grandmother always manages to set me down when I begin on the subject, but I feel that I am right about it, and—"

"Whatever you say shall be sacred with me, Miss Ormsby. If I can help you in anything I will, be sure of it."

No passion in the voice now—no sign of excitement in the quiet, earnest eyes that met hers so gravely. Norman Armystage was the self-possessed man of business now, and one could talk to him.

"I want to help my cousin," she said; "I'll come to the plans in a minute, Mr. Armystage, but this is uppermost this minute. I don't quite know what made it so, but it is. Rupert has been badly treated. He never says so; but I think so, and so must he. Papa always meant to leave him something handsome, and he must have forgotten it; for when his will was read there was only a little tiny legacy, and poor Rupert was no better off than he was before. He has never said anything. He is too generous for that; but I know he felt it very much. I want to set it right for him."

"You mean you want to endow Lord St. Quentin with a fortune?"

"Yes, I suppose that's really. I want him to have some money, and not to know anything. I don't want to appear in it. Can't it be managed some way? Couldn't a document be found somewhere, giving it to him, and all that sort of thing?"

"I am afraid that sort of thing is only practiced in novels," Norman Armystage said, with a smile. "Your lawyers are the only persons who can help you in such a matter; unless you put the money you wish to give your cousin into his hands in hard cash, and make a free gift of it that way, you must invoke the aid of the lawyers."

"I couldn't do it that way," Rosalind said, with a little laugh. "He wouldn't take it. I

am afraid I ought not to have spoken to you about it, Mr. Armystage; but I am very friendless in matters of that sort. I have really no gentleman friend that I can go to with my troubles, except Rupert himself; and I could not very well go to him and ask him how best I could give him some money without offending him."

"Well, no, I don't see how you could," Norman Armystage said, longing to be able to tell her how he wished he could be her friend, and do for her all she wanted in this as in all other things. "And to think how unworthy he is of it all," he thought, as Rosalind turned again to the plans and the cottages, and busied herself with them. "Pearls before swine! was there ever comparison more apt! The precious pearl of her priceless love thrown away on a man who—bah! I must not think of it, I must not speak of it even to myself."

He gave his attention to the papers on the table, and in a very little while they had settled the business between them. The cottages were to be proceeded with at once, and Rosalind went back to her grandmother and Miss Vereker with a promise to see Mr. Armystage again the next day.

"Rupert is gone out," Lady St. Quentin said, with some dissatisfaction in her tone, as her granddaughter entered the room. "He said you would probably be a long time over the plans, and he would not wait. I must say that he behaves in a careless fashion that would not have suited me when I was a young woman. You will have to take him in hand, and scold him well presently."

"He will come to his senses without any scolding, I hope," Rosalind replied, but she was very grave for a little.

His grandmother was right, Rupert was careless, and did not pay her the attention that was due to her as mistress of Barrons Court, to say nothing of the lover-like nothings that were her due as his affianced wife.

CHAPTER III.

ROSALIND sighed when she was out of her grandmother's sight, and wished that Rupert was a little more like other men—like Norman Armystage, was on her lips to say—but she crushed the traitorous thought before she allowed herself to put it into words. She would not see quite so much of her steward, as she called the young man, in the future. It was not well to contrast him so constantly with Rupert. Rupert was a dear, good fellow, and she had been wrong to speak and think of him as she had done; but, oh! if he would only take a little more interest in her farms and her cottages, and show himself a worthy master of the old place.

Things will right themselves by-and-by, she thought, and then she fell into a happy dream over her dressing—about the time, not so very long ago, when her cousin asked her to be his wife, and said such gentle, loving words to her as had almost made her forget her grief for her father's loss in the anticipation of the happiness in store for her as his wife. He had no habitation of his own, this impecunious, Rupert; he lived in chambers in London, or at his grandmother's Dover House, which was only a few miles from Barrons Court. And now that she was there, staying for an indefinite time with Rosalind, he was free of the place, and might have made acquaintance with all the people in it if he had so willed. He was looked upon as the future lord, but the cottagers shook their heads with the quick discrimination of the poor, and opined that the London dandy was a "poor creature," and not half good enough for their young lady. Rosalind was heart whole when he proposed to marry her, or rather her money. It mattered very little to him what manner of woman he took with it so that he came into possession of it; and he looked upon the revenues of Barrons Court almost as his right. He had expected his uncle to leave him a competence at least, and he had been put off with a paltry five hundred pounds.

He was thinking somewhat bitterly of this on this very morning as he walked briskly towards the village post-office with some letters he had been carrying about in his pocket, and suddenly remembered. Hence his departure from the room before Rosalind came back. His tailor was darning him, and he had already had the money from his grandmother to settle that very account; and there were one or two other little bills that he did not want her to know of, all of which had to be attended to, or they would have come to light. It was a hard thing, he thought, that he should have to content himself with such a paltry pittance, and haggle with his tradesmen, and beg for time to pay, when Rosalind, with not half the capacity for spending money, or enjoying it either, had more than she knew what to do with.

"Poor Rosie!" he muttered to himself, as he walked back after seeing his letters safely into the box. "She is a nice girl, and a pretty creature, too, but not like you, my darling, not like you!"

He took a little case from his breast-pocket, and opened it. He was walking through a thick plantation where he was not likely to be seen or heard, and he gazed rapturously at the face that met his eyes when he opened the morocco cover. It was not the face of his cousin, but of a woman in the very prime and fulness of her beauty—dark-browed and brown-eyed, and with rich full lips that seemed to challenge a caress in their speaking witchery.

"My own Violet!" the young man said. "My poor love! How will it all end? There will never be any other woman in the world for me if I were ten times master of Barrons Court. How shall I tell you, my darling! How shall I say that we must part, my Violet? It must be, and yet—need you ever know, my darling! There will be money enough, and—"

He stopped short with a cry of startled delight, a delight that was half fear.

There was a rustle in the bushes beside him, and the original of the portrait stepped out into the path before him.

"The embodiment of a poet's dream," someone had called Violet Mansergh, when her lovely face once served for the model of a sketch that had formed part of an artist's great picture; and just such a lovely vision she looked now with the sunlight streaming down upon her, and every feature beaming with delight and happiness.

"Violet!"

It was all he could say in his surprise and delight, and she nestled into the arms he held out to her as if she had found her proper place. It was her place, for had he not asked her to be his wife!—told her he loved her above all earthly things, and spoken of the time when they would be together, with nothing in the world to come between them?

He was not Lord St. Quentin to her. She knew him only as plain Mr. St. Clair, a customer at the shop where she had been cashier.

She was no commonplace, vulgar girl. Her father was a retired army captain, but with nothing but his half-pay to live on, and his daughter was glad to earn what she could in an honest fashion to help towards their modest household-keeping.

She had gone her own quiet way, escaping the perils to which her beauty and grace constantly exposed her, till she met Rupert St. Quentin, and she had given her heart unreservedly to him, without a thought that he was anything more than the simple gentleman he represented himself to be.

But that was far away in London, and he had no more idea of meeting her here than he had of how he should tell her how inconstant and deceitful he had been to her.

She was beside him now, and he forgot everything but her marvellous beauty and his unconquerable love.

"My darling!" he said, pressing her again and again to his heart, and kissing her sweet lips, "how came you here?"

"Where have you been that I could not tell you?" she replied, answering his question with another. "We have come to live at Norchester, papa and I."

"Norchester!"

"Yes."

"What to do there?"

"Papa has got an appointment there. What makes you look so, Rupert? What difference will it make to us?"

"None, of course, that is—"

"That is what I do you live near here?"

"No, I am only on a visit. I live in London, as you know. Tell me all about yourself, where you live in Norchester, and where I can see you."

"Where you can see me! Come and see me, of course!"

"I am not sure that I can—there are reasons. I will explain everything to you soon. I must get away now. Oh, Violet, I cannot tell you what it is to have seen you! It is like water in a desert to a thirsty man! What are you doing in these woods if you live at Norchester? It is three miles away."

"Yes, I know, but papa has some business at a farmhouse here. I am going to meet him now. We came over together, and I walked about while I waited for him. I am glad I did not stay at the inn where he put the horse. I should have missed you then. What a lovely country this is, Rupert! I have met one old acquaintance here already."

"Indeed, who?"

"A Mr. Armytage. He used to have rooms close to where we lived in London. I used to fancy he must know you when you came to see me. I saw him stare at you once or twice as if he did. I met him not half-an-hour ago."

"And spoke to him?"

"No; I don't think he knew me again, or if he did he was thinking of something else. He did not seem to see me. Don't look so concerned about it, I have really no acquaintance with him."

She thought he was jealous. She had no idea what a tempest of conflicting feeling was whirling in his heart.

"Confound him!" was his thought, as he heard Norman Armytage's name. "He is always in the way, that fellow. He will make mischief. I must manage to keep Violet out of his way."

What could have possessed them to come to Norchester? he asked himself. Was there no other town in all England they could have chosen? Rosalind went to Norchester sometimes, so did his grandmother. And if there was anything to be found out, that exemplary old lady would be sure to get at it.

He cursed his fate and his position, and told himself that there was never a man so beset since the world began.

On the one side, Rosalind and her fortune, and the position that a marriage with her would give him; on the other, Violet and her glorious beauty, and the love that would make their lives one long foretaste of Paradise!

Could he not have them both? The evil thought had entered his head more than once since he had affianced himself to his cousin. Other men led two lives, and the wronged women were none the worse while their ignorance lasted.

Ah! there was the rub! While it did—but would it last? Did not there always come an end to it, and dire retribution fall on all the offenders?

He was not wicked, as many thousands of his countrymen, this idle scion of an idle race—he was simply a man who had let himself drift into a great difficulty, and could see no way out of it.

If he could only keep the two apart—if Violet could be kept in ignorance of Rosalind, and Barrons Court and Norchester became as opposite ends of the earth, all might yet be well.

He took Violet in his arms once more—there was no one near them but the rabbits and the wild birds—and talked to her. She must not come there any more. She must keep out of the way of being seen by anyone in that neighbourhood. He would come to her, but not at her father's.

He did not want anyone to know he was there for the present. He was about some business, which would result in money—money for them both, if she would be good and patient, and,

above all things, trust him, whatever she might see or hear.

And while he was whispering his admonitions and clasping the lithe form of the beautiful girl closer and closer to his heart, Norman Armytage was coming upon them from the other side of the wood, as unconscious as they were of the coming contretemps.

"Trust you!" Violet said, as their eyes met and told each other of the oft-repeated story of their love. "Nothing can shake my faith in you, Rupert!"

Their lips met in a clinging kiss, and Norman Armytage looking through the trees saw and understood all.

"The scoundrel!" he muttered between his set teeth—"the cowardly scoundrel! That girl is no light of love that a man may play with and cast aside; she is in earnest, and she believes him. What shall I do! She ought to know—my darling, who is to be sacrificed for this mean hound! Shall I tell her? If I do will she not guess that I have some motive?—will she not suspect that I am trying to slander the man who would be my rival, if I dared to declare my passion for her! I cannot speak—I cannot bear to be silent. I must give it up, and get away. Barrons Court is no place for me. Good-afternoon, Lord St. Quentin!"

The pair had separated, and Violet had walked swiftly away in the direction of the entrance to the plantation, where she had left her father; Rupert St. Quentin turning and retracing his steps, as if to walk back to the town.

"Oh! Good-day!" he said, shortly. "Were you sent to follow me, may I ask?"

"No; but I was charged with a message for you."

"From whom?"

"Lady St. Quentin. Her ladyship bade me say, if I met you, that they were waiting for you to drive with them to the Uplands farm. Jennings has sent down about the horse you were looking at."

"Oh, thanks, I will get back quickly," said the young man, looking Norman Armytage full in the face with inquiring eyes. "Any other message?"

"None, my lord."

"He didn't say anything!" Rupert St. Quentin said to himself, as he walked away leaving the other looking after after him with a pained expression in his face. "What a mercy he didn't come upon the scene a minute or two sooner; Violet was out of sight before he saw me. Were Hawk! my stay at Barrons Court would come to a speedy end if that sneaking fellow got hold of such a bit of subject for scandal as my pretty Violet! I'll go back and do duty, and throw him off the scent if he fancies anything. I must stare my fate in the face, as I heard an idiotic comic singer say one day. I think I could be a match for Norman Armytage if I was put to it. It would be my word against his, if he made any mischief; and I think I know which Rosie would take."

CHAPTER IV.

THE summer days passed by, and Rosalind's distribution of clothing to her old people and children was made with much *éclat*, and many a blessing from aged lips showered down on the fair young head that shone like a sunbeam among the old-fashioned hoods and quaint straw bonnets of her *protégés*.

Rupert was not there. He had kept his appointment, whatever it was, and absented himself from Barrons Court till the smell of the tea and bread-and-butter had gone off, he told his grandmother, who was really very angry with him for what she considered his neglect.

"You set too great a value on yourself!" she said. "You cannot expect a warm-hearted girl like Rosie to put up with it! Girls expect more from a man than to be allowed to admire him at a distance!"

"Rosie will have enough of me by-and-by," the young man replied, somewhat shortly; "and for the present she is quite satisfied, I think. She

has her Dorcas business and her schemes, and—"

"And Norman Armytage!"

"What do you mean?"

"What I say—nothing else. Rosalind has Norman Armytage to anticipate every wish of hers before she speaks it, almost. Have a care, or she will learn to contrast him with you, and it won't be in your favour!"

"Rosalind is a lady," Rupert St. Quentin said, with some scorn; "and she will never forget that fact. I have no fear of her falling in love with her servant—and that is what you seem to imply she is doing, grannie. She would never forget herself so far!"

"Norman Armytage is not her servant; he is merely here filling his father's place. I do not for a moment accuse Rosie of what you so coarsely call falling in love with him, but she has him beside her when it should be you, but for your all-absorbing idleness and self-conceit!"

"You are complimentary, upon my word, grannie!" the young man said with a grimace.

"It is the truth, and you know it!" the old lady replied, pitilessly. "And with a girl of Rosalind's temperament the aimless, idle life you lead is sure to weary and disgust her in the end. She is quixotic and generous, and the very apathy you show towards all plans and arrangements only spurs her on to fresh schemes. Why can't you interest yourself in what she does a little? You will have to do it when you are master here!"

"I will wait till I am master, and then we shall see," Lord St. Quentin said. "Nothing you can say, or Rosie either, will ever make a farmer or an architect (that's the last craze, isn't it?) of me. As for that steward fellow, if I thought there was the least shadow of a cause for the remark you made just now I'd break his neck with as little compunction as I would drown a blind puppy."

"Well, well, on your own head be it. I have warned you. Rosalind is her own mistress, and a warm-hearted, impulsive girl, and you are not going the right way to make her happy."

"Rosie and I understand each other very well," was the apparently careless reply, and Lord St. Quentin walked away to ride over to Norchester and meet Violet Mansergh at a place they had agreed upon, and to whisper soft nothings into her willing ear with a warmth that would have astonished Rosalind Ormsby very much indeed if he had shown the one half of it to her.

There was a shadow on Rosalind's life just now—a dreadful miasma born of a gradual awakening to the fact that what she had promised her cousin, and what she had felt for him, was not the love that a girl should feel for the man to whom her whole future life is to be devoted.

She fought with herself, and tried to struggle with the knowledge; but it was there, and would not be stamped out.

Whenever she tried to think of her cousin, and all the good qualities with which nature had endowed him, there would rise in her mind the image of the man whom Lord St. Quentin had so slightly called her servant, and she would do exactly what her grandmother had prophesied.

She would contrast the low, earnest tones, and speaking dark eyes of the one with the flippant speech and self-satisfied demeanour of the other.

She thought herself very wicked, and when her grandmother, noticing that she was not well, and was languid and listless, and often looked as if she had been crying, proposed that she should go to town for the winter season, or at least part of it, she gladly acquiesced in the arrangement and professed herself willing to go away at once.

Lord St. Quentin declared his intention of going to Norway for a tour—he could not stand a season in town, he declared; his future was settled, and Rosie would get along better without him for a bit, perhaps.

"Get her away from Barrons Court for a bit, grannie," he said, "and things will right themselves. And I should like to get that fellow a situation in Sierra Leone, or some other place where Europeans die off quickly. We'll

settle down next spring, I hope, and I'll let him know who's master then."

Only till Christmas.

Rosalind was determined to pass the festive season amongst her own people, and Lord St. Quentin had to promise to be at Barrons Court to help and preside.

Perhaps he saw that any further apathy would not do; any way, he promised, and was so gently affectionate to his cousin before he started for his ramble amongst the Norwegian lakes and mountains that she began to think she had misjudged him, and that their future life would be very happy after all.

She was glad to leave town, with all its whirl of business and pleasure, and be at her own old home once more, with her hands full of presents for her beloved retainers, and comforts for the aged and needy on her estates.

She was worshipped there; she had been at home with them all ever since she was born, and her sweet face was radiant with delight as she drove about the lanes and highways, and had a word and a smile for them all.

It wanted two days of the great day. Rupert had written to say that he was in England, and would be down without fail, and she was driving alone in a little basket-carriage to a cottage about a mile from Barrons Court to see a poor woman who was ill.

Her little trap was laden with comforts for the invalid and her little children, and Rosalind was thinking as she went along of the joy that her presence would bring.

To go out alone in this fashion was nothing new to her. Ever since she could remember she had driven a pony and trap like this, and no one on her own grounds would have thought of molesting her.

Young and old—all were proud of helping and protecting the little lady, as she had always been called during her father's life, and the name had stuck to her still.

She would always be the little lady to the old folks, whatever the younger ones might call her.

"It was the young lord, sure enough—him as is going to marry our little lady."

The voice came from behind a thick hedge close to her, and she knew it. It was the voice of a rough fellow, an incorrigible poacher and ne'er-do-well, but a fervent admirer of hers for all that. With a curious feeling of something hanging over her she stopped the pony silently. The speaker had not heard her approach.

"It couldn't be," said another voice—a female one that she did not know.

"It was, as sure as my name is Dick Romer. They stood just over there, in the ten-acre lot, near them bushes, and he had her in his arms, holding her close to his heart, and talking to her as a man talks to the woman he loves. I heard him call her his darling; and well he might, for she was as beautiful as an angel!"

"Who was she?"

"How should I know! It wasn't the lady he ought to have been kissing, I know that much. Our lady is fair, and her hair is like a sunbeam; this one was dark as a gipsy, with hair that looked black in the shadow of the trees, and eyes like two stars."

"A wicked hussy, whoever she was!"

"I don't think it," the man said; "she did not look like one of that sort. She was listening, and believing, she was, and he—well, he's a false-hearted fellow; and someone ought to tell our little lady of his carryings on. I heard him tell that pretty creature he would be here again to-day about the same time, and she was to be sure not to let any one see her come—she knew the reason, he said."

"He ought to be horsewhipped!" the woman said, emphatically. "The scamp! Horsewhipping is too good for him! Where did you say they were?"

"Down at the bottom of the ten-acre lot, just at the corner by the wood. They'll be there now, I shouldn't wonder."

"I should like to go and spoil their sport for them!"

"Nay, lass, let well alone; it will come out somehow, never fear. May be, after all, the

girl's only a light o' love, and the gentry think nothing of that sort of thing. Come on, we're rested now, and we've a few miles to do before dark to-night yet."

Their footstep sounded crackling on the dead leaves and dry sticks on the other side of the hedge, and died away in the distance. And Rosalind Ormsby sat in her pony carriage, feeling as if she were turned into stone. She was alone, there was no one in sight, and she felt as if she must be asleep and dreaming. Rupert was not anywhere near Barrons Court—she had heard from him in London only that morning. Oh! it was all a mistake, or a wicked story invented by Dick Romer. He was capable of it. But she must see for herself—she must find out if this horrible thing is true. Rupert talking with another woman! Holding her to his heart and kissing her lips! Ah! no, it could not be. He would not so insult her. He had asked her to become his wife; and she had said, "Yes." He was the future Lord of Barrons Court; he would not so demean himself. He was careless and unstable, but he was not wicked. She would not believe it, and she would go to the ten-acre lot and see for herself.

She drove on quickly to the woman's house whither she was bound. She had made her plans; she would leave her carriage there and walk to the field Dick Romer had spoken of. It would be getting dusk before she could get home after such an expedition; but she would find some excuse. Grannie was used to her erratic ways and would not mind for once.

"Dear, miss, you do look bad yourself!" was the woman's exclamation, when Rosalind had seated herself for a moment by her bedside; "you are as white as white!"

"I don't think I am quite well," she replied. "I shall be better presently. I have another place to go to, Sally," she added, hastily. "Can I leave the carriage here till I come back? I think I can trust Johnny to take care of it."

"He'll not let anyone go a-nigh't, miss," the poor woman said. "If I was able to get up I'd look after it myself. It will be quite safe."

"Very well, I'll be back in a very little while," Rosalind said, rising. "I'll sit with you longer next time I come, Sally, to make up for it. I am only going to the ten-acre field."

"And what on earth does she want there?" the woman said to herself, as the young lady disappeared, walking quickly, and with a resolute step as if she had made up her mind to do something. "It's lonely on a day like this, and it won't be very long before it's dark. Ah! well, Johnny shall go home with her."

"May I come in, Mrs. Beecher?" asked someone at the door, and the woman's face lighted up with a smile at the sound of Norman Armytage's voice.

"Surely, sir—surely, if you will be so good." He entered hastily, and looked round him with surprised disappointment.

"Is not Miss Ormsby here? Her pony trap is outside."

"Yes, sir, and Johnny is taking care of it till she comes back—she won't be long."

"Where is she?"

"I don't know, sir. I'm afraid she's in some trouble or other!"

"What do you mean?"

"I hardly know, sir," said the woman; "she was very pale when she came in just now, and said she must leave the pony for a bit; she had somewhere to go. There was trouble in her eyes, sir; there were tears in her voice, though she was calm and quiet when she spoke to me. She was going to the ten-acre field, she said."

"The ten-acre field! What on earth was it took her there?"

"She didn't say, sir."

"The ten-acre field! Great Heaven! the cattle are there! I saw Hookings leading the bull down this morning!"

And before Mrs. Beecher had time to consider what he meant by his exclamation Norman Armytage had gone off at a full speed, and was making his way to the ten-acre field by the shortest route.

CHAPTER V.

VIOLET MANSBROUGH was in love—loving as blindly and as trustfully as ever Eve did when she listened to the strange new story under the whispering trees of Eden—or she would not have taken her lover upon trust, as she was doing now, and consented to meet him in secret as it were, and keep his comings and goings to herself.

The spot he had chosen—the corner of the ten-acre field, as it was called—though it was close to Barrons Court—was virtually as far from any chance of meeting Rosalind, or anyone from the house, as if it were ten miles away.

In the summer it was frequented enough, but now it was given over to cattle, and the approaches to it from the house were very uneven and dirty, and the wood was fenced up, and rarely visited.

Rupert had told the trusting girl, whom he loved with as much intensity as was in his shallow nature, some tale of creditors that had found him out, and some business which would lead to his getting a large sum of money if he held his tongue, and she had believed him and entered into the romance of the thing, and thought herself a heroine, as many girls do, when she looked round in affright lest anyone should see her creeping by a circuitous route to the place of appointment.

Her father was away on business, and she had been alone for some days, or perhaps she would not have been drawn into so compromising a proceeding as a meeting like this. She passed by Barrons Court near enough for her to see the house through the trees and the tall chimneys rising above them, and it set her thinking of the young girl, no older than herself, who owned all this magnificence.

She had seen her once or twice, and she had asked Rupert a question or two about her; but he had answered her so shortly and with such indifference that she supposed that he did not know anything about the rich Miss Ormsby. Indeed, he had told her that he did not want to know anything about any other girl. Had he not his own Violet, &c.?

"Dear Rupert," she said to herself, as she went slowly along the side of the hedge that separated the great field from the wood. "I think if he had to choose between that heiress and me he would take me. I know he would—I am sure of it!"

"Sure of what, my own darling?" and Rupert rose up from where he had been sitting, hidden by some bushes, waiting for her. "Are you apostrophising the rabbits or the cows over there—or what?"

"I was thinking of you," she said. "Did I speak out loud? I don't wonder if I did—my heart is so full it must run over sometimes. No one heard me, I hope."

"I did."

"Ah, you are no one! I think I was saying that I was sure if you had to choose between the mistress of Barrons Court there and me you would take me, poor as I am."

"You know I would," and he pressed her to his heart, looking into her face with his false eyes, and trying to forget that there was any one on earth besides themselves. "No woman in all the wide earth will ever be to me what you are, my darling—my wife that shall be!"

"Ah, say that again, Rupert! Your wife—it seems like a fairy-tale. When you are not with me I sit sometimes and wonder if it is all true—whether it is a dream from which I shall wake in the little dark den where you saw me first. I wonder whether you told me the truth that day when you came to buy that lovely bouquet; whether it was not for some one you loved, and —"

"You dear, suspicious little goose! The bouquet was not for myself at all; it was for a gentleman, who had asked me to come for it for a wedding-party. I should like to have given it to you on the spot."

"It would have been a very appropriate present for me, would it not, the florist's clerk?" Violet said, with a little laugh. "It would have

made a bright spot in our little room at home. Ah, Rupert, when are you coming to see papa! I don't like deceiving him as I am doing now."

"You are not deceiving him, my dear one! He has asked you no questions, so you have had to tell him no fibs—he simply doesn't know, that is all."

"But it is deceiving him all the same! I don't like it—I would rather you would come to our house openly and—"

"I know, dear—I know; but it can't be just yet. Why what in the name of—*Rosalind!* as I am a living man."

He spoke the name under his breath, and Violet did not catch it.

"What did you say!" she asked. "Oh, Rupert, look there! There is someone—a lady coming across the field; she does not see the cows—and, oh! look at the bull!"

"You little goose! there's no bull there."

"There is! I saw them bring him in, not half-an-hour ago. As I was turning the corner of the road I met the man with him—a great beast with a chain round his neck. He had a boy with him, and I heard him say the ten-acre field. I should not have known the field had a name but for our meeting at this corner. That is the bull coming across there. Oh! he sees the lady. Go to her, Rupert! help her!"

She would have pushed her way through the hedge, but he held her back with a strong grasp. She was right; the bull, sullen and fierce from long confinement, had caught sight of the graceful figure that was crossing the field with rapid footsteps, making straight for the corner by the wood where the two figures could be seen standing side by side. Rupert St. Quentin was, physically, a coward—mentally, brave enough. His nerves and will failed him in moments of peril or necessity; and for one second they failed him now.

CHAPTER VI.

BETWEEN Rupert could recover himself another man had risen out of the earth, as it seemed to the two, so sudden was his appearance, and Norman Armitage stood by their side.

"Do you see!" he said, hoarsely. "Are you waiting for your inheritance? Will you stand between your wife and death, or shall I?"

He was gone before Violet had time to collect herself, and was between Miss Ormsby and the advancing bull. Before the animal could reach her the grip of the white hand on Rupert St. Quentin's arm tightened, and her voice sounded clear and shrill in his ear.

"Your wife!" she said. "He said it—is it true?"

"No; on my soul, he lied!"

"It is true!" she said. "I can read it in your false face. She is Miss Ormsby, of Barrons Court, and you—ah, Heaven! what I might have been!"

She shivered, and would have fallen, but that he upheld her with his strong arm, and she recovered herself in a moment.

"No!" she said. "Do not touch me—do not come near me! Let me go, Rupert St. Clair, and Heaven forgive you for your wickedness! My only hope is that we shall never meet again!"

She turned on her heel, and left him standing there. The danger in the field over now, and Rosalind and Norman Armitage unhurt on the right side of the hedge, a few paces from him. He would have gone forward; but the utter contempt in the steward's face stopped him.

"Your chivalry comes too late!" he said, with withering scorn. "Miss Ormsby's servants are coming to see her home; you will hardly care, I should think, to await her full recovery. Go, while she is ignorant of what a coward you are!"

"You shall answer for this," gasped Rupert St. Quentin, almost beside himself with conflicting feelings, and hardly knowing what to do or say. "Miss Ormsby is—"

"Quite safe, thank Heaven! and without any help from you. Leave her before her servants

see and understand that you would have left her to die!"

"I think you exaggerate the danger," Lord St. Quentin said, with a half sneer. "A Quixote must have his windmills!"

He was half mad with anger and self-reproach. He had left Rosalind to her fate—he knew that only too well—and knew, too, how utterly contemptible he must appear in the eyes of this man. And Violet—she had heard Norman Armitage call Rosalind his wife, and she had gone away despising and hating him. Altogether, he wished the earth would open and swallow him up. What should he say to his cousin—how make his peace with the girl he loved so dearly!

"You say I exaggerate the danger," Norman Armitage said, suddenly; "look there, and remember what it would have been if someone had not interfered."

A hoarse roar from the field, and he looked in the direction of the young man's pointing finger, to see the bull stamping and tearing at something in fierce rage.

"It is her mantle," Norman Armitage said, quietly; "I threw it in his face, or we should not have been here now. Leave us, she is recovering."

She had been half-sitting, half-lying, where her preserver had placed her, on a bank, till now, more than half-unconscious of what was passing around her. Footsteps were coming hastily through the wood, and Rupert St. Quentin, with a hurried look at her white face, walked rapidly away. Rosalind hardly knew what had happened to her—her mind was in a whirl when she left her pony-carriage at Sally Beecher's, and set off to walk across the ten-acre field; she had no idea the cattle were there, and if she had known she would have gone all the same, in her present exalted state of mind.

She could think of nothing but the words she had heard, and of the young girl, "as beautiful as an angel," that Rupert was said to be meeting. Surely there were two figures there, at the very place she had heard of—a man and a woman! Ah! why had she come! The crisp crackling of the leaves and grass under her feet would betray her presence; and—ah! what was this coming towards her with such menacing sounds; surely the bull was not here—the fierce brute that she had taken counsel with one of the men about only yesterday?—yesterday, and all in it, seemed a long way off now. She had utterly forgotten the man's warning when he spoke of turning the creature loose, and here she was, face to face with it, and alone.

It all passed in a minute. It seemed to her that the bull was close upon her, lowering its great head, and uttering low howlings of expectancy. There was one moment of horror, and then something—someone she did not know—came between her and the coming peril, and she was seized by a strong arm and whirled back out of the track of the furious animal.

She never knew the danger she had been in, nor the presence of mind and fortitude that saved her—Norman Armitage could hardly tell himself how it came about, but it was done. First his stick, and then his hat, and then the loose, heavy cloak that Rosalind wore were thrown in the face of the foe—the latter causing a sufficient diversion to enable him to carry her to a place of safety. One thing she heard—one little word—as the hand gripped her first, and she was flung back to a place of safety; or had she dreamed the little sentence—

"My life for yours, my darling," and she knew that the man who had come to her rescue was Norman Armitage.

She was insensible to everything when he laid her safe and unhurt on the bank under the hedge, and only dimly conscious that two people were talking when he spoke to her cousin.

And now there were other people about her—one or two of her servants—and Norman Armitage was raising her to her feet and wrapping a shawl about her that someone had brought. It was all very odd, and like a muddled dream.

What could have happened to her! "My

darling!" Had she really heard the words! Had the grave, gentle lips that looked so resolute and so staid ever uttered the sweet words!

She knew it now, in that one brief moment of peril, when her life seemed all crowded into the space of a lightning flash, her heart had spoken.

The odd feeling that she had for her steward, the new, strange sense that made her tremble in his presence, and shrink from meeting his earnest eyes, was love; not the love that she thought she had for her weak, unstable cousin, but the love that comes once in a lifetime to man or woman, and once with them, abides.

She was frightened at her sensations, and dared not meet his eyes as he spoke to her in a low tone, and asked her if she were well enough to go home!

"Oh, yes!" she replied, rousing herself. "I have been very foolish. I have given you a great deal of trouble. Mr. Armitage, you have saved my life at the risk of your own, and I have no words to thank you!"

"The fact is thanks enough," he said; "but indeed you exaggerate the risk I have run. I am thankful to have been on the spot."

Their eyes met, and the story was told—the old, old story that has been spoken by eyes and lips since the world began, and then Rosalind dropped her head and burst into tears.

"I am very weak and foolish," she said; "but it was all so sudden and unexpected. I must not pride myself on not being afraid of cattle any more."

"Cows and a savage bull are two different things," he said, quietly. "You are safe now, Miss Ormsby; I can leave you with your servants."

"Oh, pray come home with me. Grandmamma will have heard all sorts of things, I daresay, and she will be so frightened. If she sees you with me she will be satisfied."

CHAPTER VII.

LADY ST. QUENTIN had not had time to hear of Rosalind's mishap till that young lady arrived to tell of it herself, and she was terribly scandalized at the spectacle of Norman Armitage driving her grandchild home in her little pony-trap, a sacred vehicle into which Rupert had hardly been allowed to enter.

She had been extolling the young lady's prudence and propriety of demeanour to a few guests who had arrived for the Christmas, all anxious to see how an estate could be managed by a young girl, and ready to find fault mentally with her proceedings.

It was galling to Lady St. Quentin to have her arrive accompanied by her servant, as she persisted in calling Norman Armitage, and looking as if she had been dragged through a bramble bush, as she said afterwards to Miss Vereker.

Certainly Rosalind, with her hair very much crushed, and her hair blown about, and wrapped in an old shawl, did not look much like the state mistress of an old domain like Barrons Court, and her grandmother was indignant.

"What a state to come home in, child!" she said, "and all the people here! Where have you been?"

"Face to face with death," was Rosalind's reply, spoken with so much earnestness that the old lady looked to Mr. Armitage for an explanation.

"I am afraid it is true," he said, quietly. "Miss Armitage insisted on my driving home with her; and, indeed, she was hardly fit to come alone, or only with servants. Your ladyship need not be frightened. It is all over now, except that she has left her cloak amongst the cattle in the ten-acre field."

"In the ten-acre field!" said her ladyship, in amazement. "What on earth was she doing there?"

"That is not for me to say," the young man replied. "I'm thankful that I got there in time. The bull was there, and Miss Ormsby—"

"The bull!" screamed Lady St. Quentin.

Her dread of horned cattle was overpowering, and the idea of Rosalind being in any danger from them put everything else out of her head.

"Yes, grannie, Mr. Armitage saved me from him at the peril of his own life. Thank him; I cannot."

"Heaven bless you!"

The words fell reverently from the old lady's lips, and she held out her hand to Norman Armitage, who took it blindly, and fell down in a dead faint at her feet.

He had given himself a severe strain in his rescue of Rosalind, and the effect of it overcame him now.

Perhaps his giving way at the last moment was the very best thing that could have happened to Miss Ormsby just then.

The confusion that ensued saved her from all sorts of curious questions, and she met her guests and greeted them in such a tumult that there was no time for searching questions or speculations as to her motive in crossing the ten-acre field on a December afternoon.

Norman Armitage was taken into the breakfast-parlour and made much of, but he would not hear of being done anything with but sent home in Rosalind's pony-carriage.

He was really not hurt, he said. A little strain—his own fault in jumping sideways out of the bull's reach. He should be quite well in a day or two, and he was ashamed of having made so much fuss.

He was sent home as he desired, and Rosalind shut herself into her own room to think. She was not hurt—she felt shaken and bruised, and the air seemed to be full of terrible faces with huge horns and fiery breath. But all that would wear off, and she would be quite well again tomorrow.

But there were other things that would not wear off, not even in the merry-making of Christmas—the knowledge of her cousin's perfidy (and she felt that the story was true, else why had she seen two figures there?)—and the recollection of the few words that had fallen from the lips of Norman Armitage, and the look that had met hers when she recovered from her swoon of fright and agitation.

He loved her, and she loved him above all earthly things. She knew that now, and she could never marry her cousin, even if there were no other girl in the way.

She would tell him so, but not till after this Christmas was over. When her guests were gone she would have it out with him, as the servant-girls said, and leave him free to marry whom he chose.

The festive season came and went—the very dearest Rosalind had ever spent.

Lord St. Quentin came; but for one day, pleading an engagement to an old friend, who was ill, and was so distraught and preoccupied that his grandmother took him severely to task, and told him he was going the very way to separate himself from his cousin for ever.

"Leave us alone, grannie," was the young man's reply. "We can settle our own affairs. Rosie is angry with me just now. I shall go away till she is in a better temper."

"And what is she angry with you for, pray?" asked the old lady. "You give her cause enough; but she has borne everything sweetly enough till now. What have you done to offend her?"

"She can tell you if she chooses."

There was nothing to be got out of him, and he went away. Rosalind was not more communicative.

"He has gone to please himself, grannie, dear," the girl said, with a white, weary face. "He will come back in his own good time, I dare say."

"I don't know what is the matter between you, child!" Lady St. Quentin said. "You seem all at cross purposes."

"Do well! I am a willful, capricious creature, I know; but I have not said a word to drive Rupert away. He knows best why he has gone, and where."

"There is something more than I know!" the old lady remarked. "What is this garbled story that I have heard about Rupert being in the ten-

acre field, and holding back when you were in danger? Miss Vereker came to me with a tale to that effect just now. She says you would have been killed but for Norman Armitage, and that Rupert stood by and did not interfere."

"Hardly!" Rosalind said. "The story was garbled, as you say, grandmamma. Rupert was there. He will explain to you, I dare say—he did not to me—why he deceived us, and made it appear he was in London. Mr. Armitage was quicker to see the danger I was in, I suppose. Anyway, Rupert was otherwise occupied."

"Otherwise occupied! What was he doing?" "I don't know—it was all over in a moment. I only saw the bull and my cousin for a second, and then I was tossed about as if someone were playing at ball with me, and then I suppose I fainted. I thought the bull had me; but it was only Mr. Armitage's way of getting me out of its way."

Rosalind tried to speak lightly; but the tears were gathering, and her sentence ended with a burst of weeping that would not be stilled.

"My dear child!" her grandmother said, "What is it?"

"Nerves, grannie, nerves!" she replied, as soon as she could speak. "I suppose I have been thoroughly frightened for once in my life, and I can't get over it, that's all. Don't talk to me about my cousin—leave him to me. I shall have plenty to say to him when he comes back."

Lady St. Quentin was wise—she had her misgivings; but she thought the best plan was to let well alone, and allow Rosalind to settle matters for herself.

The story of Rupert's meetings with an unknown young person had come to her in a roundabout fashion, and she had come to a pretty correct understanding of what had taken Rosalind within reach of the bull.

She was a woman of the world, and never having seen Violet Mansergh she jumped to the conclusion that her grandson was amusing himself with some girl from the neighbouring town, who was careless of her reputation; and although she felt annoyed and disgusted with him for his folly, she thought the matter would blow over, and he would see how foolish he had been to risk his position with Rosalind.

She thought less of the immorality of the affair than most ladies in her position would have done. Her husband had been a careless man, though kind and loving to her and her only son. Rupert's father had led a life that she could not think of without a heartache even now.

"It is in the blood," she thought to herself, when she heard the story of Rupert's indiscretion. "Like father like son, silly boy! Ah, well! marriage will sober him down, and Rosie will be sensible, and learn to look at things as other people do."

She was vexed that Norman Armitage should have been Rosalind's preserver. The child was romantic and quixotic enough before where he was concerned. She had heard her say things about the steward that made her fear for her perfect allegiance to Rupert.

And now the foolish boy had committed himself in a way that Rosie would be slow to forgive, and had left Norman Armitage to pose as a champion and a hero in her eyes. It was all very uncomfortable, and she was afraid to think what the end might be.

She heard with dismay, the morning after Rupert had gone away from Barrons Court, that Rosalind had gone to see Mr. Armitage, and she made an excuse to go the same way. She hardly knew what she expected to see, but she found the young man alone, still confined to the sofa by the severity of the strain he had received, and very glad to see her.

"Yes, Miss Ormsby has been kind enough to call," he said in reply to her question. "She has only just left."

"I thought I should overtake her," Lady St. Quentin said. "She did not tell me where she was going, or we could have come together. We are all so anxious about you."

"Thank you; you do me too much honour! I verily believe I am only lay. Lying here I feel no pain. It is only when I try to get up that I feel crippled."

"Then don't try till you are quite able. Which way did Miss Ormsby go? Can you tell me? Did she say whether she was bound?"

"I did not see her."

"Not see her?"

"Just so! I was hardly fit. Neither my room nor myself were in proper condition to receive a young lady. But I had another reason for refusing to see her. Will you explain and make my peace with her, if I have offended her, as I am afraid I may have done?"

"She will not be offended at anything you may do," Lady St. Quentin said, and she could have bitten her tongue out for her unlooked-for speech the moment she had uttered it when she saw the look that it brought into the speaking eyes of Norman Armitage, and the bright flush of pleasure that overspread his face.

"I mean, she thinks herself overlastingly indebted to you—as we all do," she added, rather clumsily. "But why did you not see her? What was the reason?"

He could not tell her that—he dared not. That he could not trust himself, lying there with all the love that was in his heart surging through him like fire in his veins. He could not look into her sweet face and listen to her gentle voice without speaking. And what misery blaspheaming might entail! His answer was ready now for Lady St. Quentin, and his nerves stilled, and he looked her in the face without a tremor.

"The sight of me would have recalled the peril," he said. "When she sees me on my legs again, and going about as usual, she will have forgotten it, I trust; but it must be too fresh in her memory now for her to bear the sight of me. I know she exaggerates the slight damage I have done to myself. I would rather not see her, for her own sake, till there has been time for her to forget it."

Lady St. Quentin looked at him with some curiosity, but his eyes did not speak now. They were blank for all there was in them that concerned Rosalind Ormsby.

"Will you tell me the truth about this affair?" she asked, presently. "I have heard all sorts of garbled accounts of what happened. The most astonishing tale is, that my granddaughter went there after her cousin, who—that she went there to meet him, in short; and that he allowed the bull to attack her without attempting to save her—that he was with a—another person. Can you tell me how much of it all is true?"

"My own personal experience I can relate, of course," the young man said, returning her inquiring look with a fearless gaze. "I was going by the field, and I saw, to my astonishment, a lady walking across it towards the wood at the further end."

"And my grandson?"

"I did not see him then. I recognized Miss Ormsby, and saw the bull advancing towards her at the same moment. The rest all passed in less time than I could tell it in. It was a wild confusion—a whirl of hoofs and horns, and whatever I could lay my hands on, to poke in the creature's face. I am afraid I was very rude to Miss Ormsby. I distinctly recollect tearing her cloak from her shoulders to throw at the bull. I saw him amusing himself with it afterwards. Lord St. Quentin thought I was rather exaggerating the danger, and I pointed it out to him. I am afraid there are not many shades of it left."

"Ugh! it was horrible!" Lady St. Quentin said. "We shall be indebted to you to our lives' end, Mr. Armitage."

"It was nothing," he replied; and watched her depart with a sigh of relief, after a few more polite speeches and leading questions on her part, all of which he managed to parry with much skill.

"She shall learn nothing from me," he said. "It is not for me to shake her faith in that. Have a care, Norman Armitage; he will be paid in full without any interference of yours."

CHAPTER VIII.

RUPERT ST. QUENTIN was not quite so bad as Norman Armitage believed him to be. To do



"I DON'T THINK IT," THE MAN SAID; "SHE DID NOT LOOK LIKE ONE OF THAT SORT."

him justice, he would never have made love to his cousin but for his grandmother's representations about the estates of Barrons Court, and the desirability of "marrying money," as she put it.

He had allowed himself to drift into the engagement with Violet Mansergh. He had fallen in love with her from the first moment of their meeting, and he soon found that she was a good, virtuous girl, not to be won in any way but the legitimate one.

He had gone on blindly and recklessly since, trusting to some impossible future to right everything—as so many men do when they get into scrapes.

He was suffering from his folly now. He perfectly understood the unconcealed scorn with which Rosalind regarded him, and knew quite well that the next time they met she would have recovered her wits sufficiently to speak plainly and tell him what she meant to do.

"It's good-bye to Barrons Court!" he said to himself, as he made his way to Norchester.

He could not rest without trying to see Violet and have an explanation with her. He would tell her everything, and how he had been drawn into engaging himself to his cousin, and he would ask her to forgive him and marry him, poor as he was.

And then, perhaps—ah! it would be very dreadful to be poor, and all that sort of thing; but it would be better to be happy with his darling Violet, if she would forgive him and have him, than to remain at Barrons Court and be miserable.

"Besides, Rosie likes someone else better than me," he said to himself. "I am sure of it; she would never be happy as my wife."

He tried to console himself with that notion, as he walked boldly enough to the house where Violet Mansergh lived with her father. No one seemed to be about, and his knock was answered by a dingy-looking servant girl, who told him that Miss Mansergh was at home, but did not ask him to walk into the house.

He put his card into the girl's hand, and bade her ask her mistress if she would see him for a moment. In a few moments she was back again.

"Miss Mansergh's compliments, and she does not know the name," she said, and Rupert started and blushed.

"Take her that," he said, scribbling Rupert St. Clair across another card and handing it to the servant; "she will know that name."

The girl was sooner back than before.

"Miss Mansergh declined to see the gentleman under any name," was the message she brought now, and Rupert was fain to go away.

"I think I'll go and drown myself!" he muttered as he walked quickly away from the house. "I don't see what good I am in the world!"

"Rupert!"

He looked up to see Rosalind beckoning to him from her pony-carriage. She had driven into Norchester, a thing she rarely did. But Norman Armytage's enforced absence had thrown some business on to her shoulders that no one else could attend to very well, and she had come to see after it.

"Is that you, Rosie! Do you want me!"

"Yes, dear," and there was more tenderness than there had been of late in her voice when speaking. "Come into the carriage and drive me home. Heartwell can walk back."

Thus bidden Rupert got into the carriage, though he wished himself a thousand miles away as he did so, and drove rapidly through the town at his cousin's bidding. When they were fairly out of the streets and in the pleasant lanes that were the shortest road to Barrons Court, Rosalind said, suddenly,—

"It was only to say good-bye, Rupert."

"What do you mean!" he asked. "Good-bye!"

"Yes, to our Darby and Joan future. You don't love me, Rupert; you have never loved me as a man should love the woman he is going to

promise to love and cherish to his life's end. Let us part and shake hands, dear cousin, and be friends."

"With all my heart! Remember it is your doing, not mine."

"I will take all the blame, if blame there be. You don't belong to me. Go to the girl you held in your arms the other day, into whose eyes you were looking when Norman Armytage saved me from—you belong to her, not me."

"I've been a confounded fool, I know that!" Rupert St. Quentin said, with a grimace. "And look here, Rosie, I can't look in your face and lie somehow."

"Thank you; I knew you couldn't."

"I do love Violet Mansergh, with all my heart and soul I do. And I think I would lay down ten years of my life to-morrow to hear her call me her husband. It was my grandmother, and the money, and—all that you know," he added, bungling terribly over his apologies, and blushing like the clumsy fellow he was.

He had been so vain of himself—had thought himself equal to any emergencies—and here he was stumbling and blundering over his explanations with his cousin.

(Continued on page 522.)

THE first head of saffron was smuggled out of Greece in the hollow of a pilgrim's staff; in like fashion silkworms arrived in the south of Europe, the first tulip bulb entered Holland, and the first asparagus made its way into England. The seeds of the melon, apricot, tomato, onion, cauliflower and guinea, were all carried out of the country that strove to keep the monopoly of them, in the hollow of a staff. The fashion of concealing "portable property" in the walking stick was not confined to the days of the pilgrims; being a useful contrivance, it has survived to the present day.



"SEE HERE," REPLIED MADELINE, COLOURING GUILTYLY. "DO YOU MISS ANYTHING, HUGH?"

MADELINE GRANT.

CHAPTER VI.

THE very morning after Madeline had despatched her letter a telegram was handed in to Miss Grant, 2, Solferino-terrace. The landlady herself mounted panting to the attic, orange envelope in hand.

"I was just for sending it away, ma'am," to Madeline she gasped, surveying her with an inquiring eye; "but it came into my head as I'd show it to you, on chance."

"Thank you, it is for me," returned the other, hastily tearing it open and running her eyes over it, with suddenly heightened colour.

"Come here at once, to-day if possible—news of your father—From Mrs. Penn," was the message she read, with the greatest astonishment—astonishment and agitation reflected in her face.

"But it's for Miss Grant, and you've opened it!" exclaimed the landlady, suspiciously. "How is that, eh? I never would have supposed—no, never—squaring herself, and becoming extremely red, "as you wasn't on the square, and as I've always kept a respectable house I couldn't think—"

"You need not alarm yourself, Mrs. Kane, and you need not think about the matter, it's all quite right. I am Mrs. Glyn; but I was Miss Grant before I became Mrs. Glyn, and the sender of the message does not know that I am married," interrupted Madeline, speaking with studied composure, but her heart all the time beating very fast.

Insolent as was Mrs. Kane she must not quarrel with her; her roof covered them on suffrance only. Were she to thrust them forth, where could they go?

They were quite at her mercy, for they owed her money, and later she had been inclined to take out a good deal of interest in rude insolence, and biting vulgar gibes, and unpleasant hints with regard to paupers a-coming and settling on

honest, poor, hard-working people—paupers as could afford dress, and flowers, and theatres, and pianos once, but saved nothing for a rainy day.

Paupers—impecunious people like the Glyns—especially Mrs. Glyn, who bore the brunt of these encounters, could not afford to stand on their dignity and be independent and "move on."

They must humbly submit; but it was very galling, nearly as galling to Madeline as Miss Selina's yoke, that had pressed on her so heavily, little more than a year ago.

Who but herself knew with what deprecating eyes and voice she had pleaded with the irate landlady for a little time—how humbly she ventured to ask for coals—how stealthily she stole up and down stairs, carrying baby, doing her own miserable errands, making her presence as unobtrusive as possible, for fear of offending her hostess's irritable eyes.

Her hostess's irritable eyes were fixed upon her now with a look that was all but insulting as she listened to her explanation, and with a—

"Oh, well I suppose, as I know no better, I must believe you!" and with a violent sniff, that intimated the very reverse, Mrs. Kane glared once round their miserable sitting-room—as if to see if anything were broken or missing, or the valuable property damaged in any way—and failing to find the smallest pretext for complaint went out of the room with an aggressive strut, banging the door loudly after her.

Madeline lost no time in rushing to the invalid with her great news, and placing the piece of pink paper in his hand,—

"Here's something at last! I feel that some change is coming, that these dreadful days cannot—cannot go on for ever! I believe papa is alive—is coming home!" she exclaimed. "What do you think, Hugh?" she asked, breathlessly.

Hugh, still holding the telegram in his thin, transparent-looking hand, gazed at his wife for some seconds in silence.

How changed she was he thought to himself,

with a sharp pang of self-reproach. She was shabby, very genteely shabby.

Her poor black dress, all mended and pieced, her face was thin, her eyes sunken, their look eager, anxious, and almost desperate.

An ordinary intelligent person would have declared that she looked half-starved, and so she was; but how furiously she would have disclaimed such a verdict!

She would rather have died than admitted its truth. As long as Hugh had meat once a day—as long as baby had milk—she did very well on anything, and anything may mean almost nothing—it is an elastic word. Hugh was telling himself that he had been a culpable wretch to marry Madeline Grant.

What could he say to her father when he once more placed his daughter in his arms—a daughter in all but rage, with a face pinched with hunger, without a friend, without a penny, and weighted with a dying husband and a peculiarly ill-tempered baby?

How much better it would have been if he had curbed his foolish fancy, nipped it at once in the bud, and left Madeline to her fate. Any fate would be better than that to which he, miserable man, had so speedily and powerlessly reduced her.

What would her father say? Would he cast her off? Madeline had hinted that her papa, as well as she could judge from his letters, was fond of money, show, style, and great people.

He hoped that she would always make acquaintances with girls who were fully her equals, and not lower herself by school friendships that might be impossible to keep up in after-life.

She had once innocently repeated this to him verbatim, and now it all came vividly before his mind.

Madeline had done worse than form a friendship of which her aspiring parent would disapprove—a friendship that could have been slipped out of like an old glove. Here she was tied for life to a poor man, whose only occupa-

tion seemed likely to be that of an invalid—a stone round her neck as long as he lived.

He had but faint hopes of his own recovery. Everything was against his getting better. He knew it could not be helped, and he was very patient.

If he had had good wine, wholesome delicacies to tempt his appetite, pure air, change, he might have a chance, and he knew he might just as well cry for the moon.

"What is to be done, Hugh?" asked Madeline, rather surprised at his long silence. "What do you think of it?"

"You must go, of course," he returned, at last—"to-day."

"Go to-day? My dear Hugh, what are you thinking of?" sitting down in a rush chair as she spoke, and looking at him with wide-eyed amazement. "Where is the money to come from?" nodding her head as if she had advanced an unanswerable question. "Look! Here," producing a shabby little purse with a brass clasp, and turning out the pitifully small contents, "is all I have—two-and-sevencpence!"

"Still you must go, Madeline, by hook or by crook. Much may depend on it. A return third-class—"

"A return third-class would be twice eighteen-and-sixpence—one pound seventeen," she interrupted. "And besides that I could not go in this," looking round at her old gown. "Now"—appealing—"could I?"

"No, you could not," he returned, with a little flush in his pale face. "And you must get something out. To get something out something else must go in, and—with an effort—" I never thought to part with it, but—but it must go, and it will go in a good cause. I mean," wiping his damp forehead, as he spoke, "my mother's miniature. It is set in seed pearls—the back is gold—it ought to bring in a couple of pounds. It's in my desk, Madeline, in a little carved morocco case.—Take it, my dear, and welcome!"

"Oh, Hugh!" coming over and kneeling beside him. "I don't like to. Must I really? I know you think so much of it. It's the only relic you possess. No, I really can't."

"Yes, you can and shall," said the sick man with decision. "Here, at last, is an opening for you, my poor Madeline. Something tells me your father is alive—is coming home rich. You are his only child, his heiress. You will be looked after and provided for, and have a home when I am gone. Yes, my dear Madeline, it will be best for you in the end. It was wicked of me to marry you. I see it all so plainly now, having nothing set by for such a strait as this, and no friends; but I never, never dreamt it would come to this, Madeline. Believe me, I never did. Forgive me! I should have taken you to Mrs. Wolferton's house and telegraphed to her, and left everything in her hands, as she would have got you a situation, instead of dragging you into such a pit as this!" with an inclusive wave of his emaciated hand and a glance round the mean little attic. "But it won't be for long now, Madeline!" he added, in a lower tone.

"Oh, Hugh!" she almost screamed, as she seized his arm, "what are you saying? Why are you telling me such terrible things now that we have a little gleam of hope at last? It's cruel, cruel of you. You couldn't mean that after all we have gone through together, after all our troubles, that when we are just getting into smooth water at last, you—you would leave me!" and here she suddenly broke down and burst into tears; for, alas! she had a sharp inward conviction that there was some truth in what he said.

How pale and thin and weak he looked! No one would know him who had seen him last year, and she had an agonising feeling that it was not mere actual illness, nor the dreags of that terrible fever that was to blame for this, but that cruel, pitiless, ferocious wolf—man. He was dying of the lack of mere necessities, and she, miserable woman, was powerless to procure them, and for this she laid her head down and wept as if her heart would burst—wept in a manner that Hugh had never seen anyone weep before—a manner that frightened him.

"Don't Madeline, don't," he whispered, feebly,

stroking her hair, "you will be better without me, though you won't think so now. You are young—only nineteen. Many bright days may be in store for you yet, whilst mine are numbered. But I will leave you contentedly if your father has come home. The greatest dread I have ever known will be lifted from my mind!"

"You don't know, dearest, what torments I have gone through as I lay awake through the long dark nights listening to the church clocks striking hour after hour, and wondering what would become of you!"

"New Providence has answered the question, and your natural protector will give you and the child a home, and—where now, Madeline, I can't bear to see you cry like this! I—I may get over it, you know; but it is best to prepare you for the—ah! now you see you have awakened the baby," as a shrill querulous yell from the next room, which the door stood ajar, interrupted what he was going to say; and the maternal instinct thus suddenly roused, he hoped that her tears would cease, as he was powerless to stop them.

And Madeline, completely broken down—Madeline, who was always so brave, and who had come out in a new and strong light under the searing, scorching flames of the furnace of affliction, was a sight that completely unmanned him.

Madeline hastily dried her eyes, struggled to strangle her long-drawn sob, and took her shrieking offspring out of his cradle and gave him his midday bottle, which appeased his appetite and soothed his temper.

Then she came back to her husband with the child in her arms, and said, in a broken voice,—

"If you had change of air, good food, properly cooked, fruit, wine, and little delicacies all sick people require; you would get well, I know you would!" passionately; "and, Hugh, if I have to steal them, you shall have them. Promise me—promise me you will try to get better," she continued, tremulously. "Promise me that you will wish to get better, Hugh, for—for our sake."

"I can promise that, Madeline, at any rate," he replied, with a wan smile; "but you know the old proverb about wishes."

"And you know that while there's life there's hope," she returned, very quickly. "I have hope—you must have hope, too; and now I am going out, and you will have to mind baby. I will leave him with you. He will be very good; he will go off to sleep again directly," placing the white bundle beside his father, who eyed his charge dubiously as it stared at him stolidly, thumb in mouth.

Madeline hurriedly put on her hat and jacket, and taking a key, unlocked her husband's old brass-bound desk, and after a little search drew out the red morocco case.

"Is it this?" holding it up. "This is what you mean?"

A nod assured her that she was right. "You would like to look at it once more," she said, gently, laying it in his hand. "Hugh, I don't know how to take it," she faltered. "You are so like her, too," looking down at the little oval miniature of a pretty, spirited-looking girl, with dark eyes, dark curls, and a white dress, and seeing a suspicious moisture in her husband's eyes, she fixed greedily on the picture. "You were so fond of her, Hugh!"

"Not more than I am of you, Madeline," he answered, decisively, closing the case with a snap. "Here, take it, my dear, and go, and don't be long."

Needless to add this formula. Was she ever long!

But time went slowly when Madeline was absent from those two poor little attics which she called "Home."

CHAPTER VII.

"He has not awoke since, has he?" asked the anxious mother as, fully an hour later, she reappeared with a bundle and a basket.

"No," with a sigh of relief.

"I see he is sound," laying down her load as she spoke. "And now to begin at the very

beginning. Hugh," opening the basket, and producing a bottle, "there is some good port wine. I've carried it so carefully, not to shake it. You must have a glass at once—that is to be the beginning." hunting for a corkcrew.

"Oh, Madeline, what extravagance! when you—"

"Hush! please to listen," producing as she spoke a bunch of grapes, six fresh eggs, a tin of Liebig, and a packet of biscuits from her seemingly inexhaustive store, and laying them on the table.

"Then you are not going, and you have spent the money all on me!" exclaimed her husband, in a tone of deep disapproval.

"Yes, I am," she returned, promptly, now opening the bundle, and shaking out a dress that she had pawned, and looking at it with an expression on her face that showed that it was an old and favourite friend. "Here is an A B C Guide. I go to-night, when I've left you comfortable and baby asleep. Mrs. Kane's step-niece has promised to look after you to-morrow, and to-morrow night I return, all being well."

"Then they gave you a good price for the miniature?"

"Price!" indignantly. "They turned it over and over, and sneered at it, and said they had no use for such like; but they could not say it was not real gold and real pearls, and they gave me fifteen shillings, and said it was more than it was worth."

"Then how—where did you get money for your journey?" asked her husband, in a tone of amazement bordering on impatience.

"See here," she replied, holding up both her bare hands. Very pretty hands they were, too, but now a little coarse from hard work. "Do you miss anything, Hugh?" colouring guiltily.

"Your—your wedding-ring and keeper," he answered, after a moment's pause—a moment of incredulity.

"You won't be angry with me, dear, will you?" she said, coming and kneeling down beside him. "It makes no real difference, does it?" now becoming extremely red. "Please, please, Hugh, don't be vexed; but I got thirty-five shillings on them, and they are the first things I shall redeem. I shall only take a single ticket, third-class. Mrs. Penn will surely lend me a few pounds, and I will be able to leave ten shillings for you to go on with."

"How can I be angry with you, Madeline!" said her husband. "It is my fault, the fault of my rashness, thoughtlessness, selfishness, that you have had to do all this, my poor child. Oh, that snowy night was a bad one for you. I ought to have left you and walked back."

"Such nonsense!" cried his wife whose spirits were rising. "I won't have you say such things. It's a long lane that has no turning. I think—oh, I believe and pray—that I do see the end of ours. And now there's a nice roast chicken for your dinner. I left it with Mrs. Kane downstairs. She asked me if I had come in for a fortune when I brought it to the kitchen. A fortune, indeed! It was only two-and-threepence; but I told her that I believed I had. Oh, dear! oh, dear! I hope my words will come true!"

Madeline's packing was represented by changing her dress. Her preparations were confined to brushing, rubbing up, and inkling her hat, mending her gloves, which, like the typical landlady, "had seen better days," and washing and getting up a collar and pair of cuffs with her own hands.

"You look quite smart, Madeline!" said Hugh, as she completed her toilet, and came and showed herself to him.

"Yes, I don't look so very, very poor, do I?" she asked, rather anxiously.

"No-o," dubiously; but he added, with a smile, "no one who looks at your face will think of your clothes; and, indeed, Madeline, it's not so that a pretty young girl such as you look, and are, should be travelling third-class alone such a long journey."

"Rubbish, rubbish, rubbish!" she answered, emphatically. "I'll wear a veil, if that will please you; but no one will notice me. They

will think I'm some poor girl going to a place, you stupid Hugh. You think everyone must admire what you thought pretty. And it's not my face that Mrs. Penn will notice—you may be sure of that."

Ten minutes later she had kissed the sleeping baby, taken leave of Hugh, given many whispered directions to Mrs. Kane's step-niece and a whole half-a-crown from her little fund, and with a beating heart and rather watery eyes started on foot for a distant terminus.

No, she would not even take a twopenny fare in a bus; she must save every penny, and she would have plenty of rest in the train, and so she had, of a sort, on the hard, wooden upright seats of a third-class carriage for eight mortal hours.

There is not much repose in such a situation, nor much sleep to be obtained, and the train roared along through theinky black night, and tore through small stations with a shriek of contempt that shook them to their foundations, and also nearly shook the teeth of unhappy third-class passengers out of their heads.

After a whole night's travelling of this uneasy description, Madeline arrived at her destination, the terminus of Riverford, and gladly alighted on the platform. One trouble was spared her—luggage.

She went and washed her face and hands, and arranged her hair and hat, and shook off some of the dust in the waiting-room, invested fourpence in a bun and cup of coffee, and felt herself fortified sufficiently to encounter Mrs. Penn, but not Miss Selina.

Another journey by rail—a short walk, and she found herself once more on the familiar doorstep of Penchester House, and rang timely.

A strange maid (who knew not the delinquencies of Miss Grant) opened the door, rather surprised at such an early visitor.

She informed her that Mrs. Penn was not down yet, nor Miss Penn, and showed her into the drawing-room, which was in the act of being dusted; and here she waited for a considerable time, whilst a sound of footsteps and voices was very audible above her head.

She looked round the room and felt as if she had only quitted it yesterday—and, oh! what a gap there was in her life between the last time she had stood there, and listened to Miss Selina's spiteful remonstrances, and now! The room was just the same.

There was the best piano, on which she had had many a music lesson; there was Alice Burne's big coloured chalk drawing, Amy Watson's two water-coloured landscapes, Florence Blunt's bead mats, Isabella Carr's crawl work, all votive offerings to the Penn family, and advertisements to pupils' relations who came to make inquiries about the school. Presently the door was flung open and Miss Penn—if I may dare to say so—burst into the room.

"Oh, Madeline!" she exclaimed, "so it's you! How more than thankful I am," shaking hands and looking into her face with eager scrutiny. "You are thin! but thin or fat you are welcome back. Come up at once to my mother's room, she's dressing—she does not come down early now—and she wants to see you." (Here was an honour!) "Come, the girls are all in the school-room, and breakfast-bell will ring in a quarter of an hour," rising. "You have heard about Selina?" she asked, impressively, with two red spots on her cheeks, and a spark of fire in either eye. "Have you not heard?" she demanded, hurriedly.

Miss Selina! It was not of Miss Selina Madeline had come to hear, and she shook her head and answered "No."

"She's married. She married nearly a year ago," returned Miss Penn, impressively, "Mr. Murphy, the red-haired curate. She—she behaved atrociously—atrociously. Don't mention her to my mother, nor ask about her, we don't speak," flinging open the door wide, as she paused out the last sentence.

All the reply Madeline could find to make was—

"Indeed!"

But she felt a very lively satisfaction to hear

that her old enemy was no longer an inmate of Penchester House—had gone away as she once did, in disgrace.

"You will find my mother greatly changed," whispered Miss Penn, as she preceded Madeline upstairs, at a rapid pace; "she's had a slight stroke—all the trouble and anxiety about Selina—and she is not what she was! She never comes down until after early dinner, but take no notice."

"Madeline!" cried the old lady, as Madeline entered the room and beheld her propped up in bed in her best nightcap. "This is too good to be true. I scarcely expected it. Come here, my dear, and kiss me," tendering a withered cheek.

The old lady's mind was surely affected, thought her late pupil to herself. That she, who had been so ignominiously cast out, was thus welcomed back as a sort of prodigal daughter was scarcely credible, unless viewed from the idea that the old lady had become imbecile in the meanwhile.

But no, the reason of this great change from the frost of neglect to the sun of welcome—affectionate welcome—was a very potent reason indeed.

It was the prospect of a large sum of money.

Since Madeline had been banished nothing had gone well—her place taken by a governess had been quite an outlay—her want was felt.

Then came Selina's wicked tampering with her sister's sweetheart, heart-burning scandal, family linen sent to the public wash, and great falling off in the school.

Things were going badly, it was all down-hill; one girl leaving after another—many vacant places round the long table.

At last came a letter from, of all people, Mr. Grant, enclosing a large draft on his bankers, and announcing his return, a wealthy and successful man.

The draft was to pay two-and-a-half years' schooling, with interest; in short, up to date. But for fifteen months Miss Grant had been elsewhere.

How could they honestly claim these badly-wanted pounds! And when Mr. Grant returned what were they to tell him!

His daughter had been banished, they knew not where; and his money must be restored.

Viewed now in a softer light, Madeline's deeds were excusable. Madeline was Selina's victim, and to be pitied, not blamed.

Madeline must be sought and, if possible, found and reinstated as if nothing had occurred; and we have seen how Madeline had been discovered.

"Rebecca, you go down and presently send up breakfast for two, whilst I have a talk with Madeline," said the old lady, who still had authority, though she had lost the use of her right hand.

And Rebecca, having previously rehearsed the whole "talk" with her mother, and fearing that too many cooks might spoil the broth, went obediently.

"Take off your hat and jacket and gloves, and make yourself at home, my dear. I am sure you will not be surprised—put them on the ottoman—to hear that your father is alive and well, and is shortly returning home an immensely," dwelling lovingly on the word "rich man."

Madeline's heart bounded, her face was in a flame. So her presentiment had come true!

"Ah! I see you are surprised; so were we, when we got his letter a fortnight ago. Here, bring me that case, the green one, on the little table, and I'll read it to you at once, or you may read it yourself, if you like."

Madeline did as she was desired, brought the case, picked out a foreign letter, in the well-known hand, and sat down to read it beside Mrs. Penn's bed, that lady having assumed her glasses for the nonce, gazing at her intently all the while.

This is what the letter said:—

"Port Royal, Jamaica.

MY DEAR MRS. PENNY,—After such a long silence you will be surprised to see my handwriting, I am sure, but here I am.

"I am afraid Madeline has been very uneasy about me, and, indeed, no wonder. I met with some terrible losses more than two years ago in mines in South America, and the anxiety and trouble threw me into a fever. I was laid up for months, and when I again put my shoulder to the wheel, I made a vow not to write home till I was as rich a man as ever. I knew that you, who had the care of Madeline since she was a mite, would trust me; and everything would go on as usual. I had always been such punctual pay, you would give me law for once. I am now, I'm glad to say, the richest man in the island; my mines, once so losing, have turned up trumps, and other investments ditto.

"I am coming home a millionaire, and Maddie shall keep house in style in London, and hold her own with the best.

"I heard a foolish story about some beggarly young man and her, but I am certain it was only a report; you would never allow my heiress to play the fool. If she did, she knows very well that I would disown her. I'm a fond father enough, and a good father, as you can testify; but I'll have no beggarly fortune-hunters or pulling love affairs. A hint to Madeline from you that at the least nonsense of that sort I marry again, and let her please herself.

"She's had a good education, she can earn her bread. But this, I believe, is not needful to go on with. You are a sensible woman, Madeline's a sensible girl. If she's my daughter, I have views for her—very great views.

"I shall follow this letter in about six weeks' time, and will write again by leaving steamer, and you and Maddie can meet me at Southampton. I enclose a draft on my bankers of four hundred and fifty pounds—two hundred and fifty pounds for Madeline's schooling, &c., for two years, and the balance for pocket-money, and a few gowns that she may be smart when her old father comes home."

Madeline shook out the letter. No draft was to be seen.

"I have banked it," put in Mrs. Penn, who had been watching every change in her countenance, "it's all right," encouragingly.

"And now I must conclude, hoping soon to see you and Madeline, and with love to her, I am, yours faithfully,

"ROBERT GRANT."

"Well, now Madeline, what do you think of that!" demanded Mrs. Penn, removing and wiping her glasses.

"I'm very—very glad, of course," returned Maddie, her brain in a whirl, but now fully comprehending the reason of Mrs. Penn's blatherings and enthusiastic welcome.

"We are sorry, dear," soothingly, "that we were so hasty about Mr. Glyn; it was all Selina's doing—all—I assure you. I had no hand in it," impressively. "I'm truly thankful to see, especially after your father's letter, that you did not marry him."

"Not marry him!" echoed Madeline, colouring, and glancing sharply at Mrs. Penn. "What do you mean?"

"I see you are not married by your hand," pointing a long finger at Madeline's ringless finger. "Is not that sufficient proof?" sharply.

Madeline felt that she was at a crisis in her life, when she must take action at once. Her father's letter—Mrs. Penn's natural conclusion—their own dire want—all impelled her to the quick decision made on the instant. She would for the present temporise, at least till she had made her father's acquaintance; told him her own story, and accomplished pardon. Now to declare that she was a wife would be ruin—ruin to her—death to Hugh—for, of course, her father would cut her off with a shilling, and she knew that he had very strong prejudices—a grotesque adoration for rank and riches, and an abhorrence of the poor and needy, also that he was a man of his word. This she had gleaned long ago out in Jamaica, even at the early age of nine years. Her mind was made up, and at one second's notice, but with hands that shook as she folded up the letter, she resumed the character of Miss Grant!

(To be continued.)

PAYING THE PENALTY.

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CHAPTER LIII.

RACHEL could not understand this strange lady.

As she alighted from the carriage the first person whom she saw was Philip Walton.

He stopped short, looking at her in fear. Would the sight of him cause her to remember all—encountering him as she fled that night from the home which she believed Paul Verrell had deserted?

He dared not utter the first word, but stood quite still raising his hat, his face flushing, then paling.

Would she remember seeing him in the railway train? remember talking with him there?

One moment decided the question for him. Rachel stepped forward with a cry of surprise, holding out her little hands to him.

"Mr. Walton!" she exclaimed, "what can bring you so far away from home, I wonder?"

He shook her hands eagerly.

"I might ask the same question of you, Mrs. Verrell," he answered; adding—"A gentleman's business takes him far away from home many a time. I expect to be in Scotland at least two or three weeks. Where are you stopping?"

Rachel burst into tears.

"I am the paid companion to a lady," she said. "I really do not know just where we are going to stop; but I think I heard her say we are going to the Queen's Hotel."

"Is that so? If that is the case we will probably see considerable of each other, for that is where I am stopping. Who did you say the lady was with whom you live?"

"Mrs. Grant, a widow."

"Oh, indeed!" said Walton. "Unless I am very much mistaken, I think I have met the lady. Is she the person who passed along just ahead of you?"

"Yes," said Rachel.

"Ah! I thought her face looked decidedly familiar; but I was so surprised at my unexpected meeting with you that I did not give her the second look. She is a very eccentric woman," he pursued, "and yet I hear she is a good-hearted woman, and very wealthy. You will do well to stop with her—that is, for the present. I have a very pressing business engagement to keep this morning," he said. "If nothing prevents, I will see you this afternoon, or evening, at the latest."

With these words he was gone, and Rachel turned and entered the shop.

Mrs. Grant was awaiting her just inside the door.

"You seem to have met an old acquaintance, my dear. I did not know that you had any acquaintances here."

"My meeting that gentleman was quite accidental. I had no idea that he was here. He is stopping at the same hotel that we are to stop at."

"Yes, I know him; he is Mr. Philip Walton, and a grander gentleman never lived. He's as liberal as a prince."

Jennie Grant saw that her fair listener had very little interest in Mr. Walton.

She wondered if they were estranged lovers, as Daphne had been so vague with the information she had given her.

"That will make your stay at the hotel very much pleasant, won't it, my dear?" she said.

"I don't know," said Rachel. "I shall not go down to the dining-room, and then I shall not be brought in contact with him only at meal-times—perhaps not then."

"Fy, fy, my dear! You want to capture a rich fellow like that if you can. He'd make a very good husband for you."

"No, no," cried Rachel, painfully; "please do not mention such a thing again, Mrs. Grant. It could never be!"

"Nonsense!" declared Mrs. Grant. "You don't mean to say that you want to be an old maid, do you?"

Rachel flushed hotly and murmured some

unintelligible reply. Mrs. Grant led the way to the ready-made dress department, where she purchased two or three very costly and very flashy dresses for herself, requesting Rachel to pick out as many dresses for herself, saying she'd pay the bill.

Rachel demurred; but she insisted.

"She must, indeed, be a most generous-hearted lady," she thought, her heart going out in deep gratitude to her.

All the way back to their apartments Jennie Grant could find no other subject but Philip Walton to talk about, until it occurred to Rachel that the widow must certainly be very much smitten with him.

By nightfall they were safely ensconced in their suits of rooms at the hotel.

"I tell you this is something like life!" cried the widow, looking around the rooms in ecstasy.

She was so delighted over everything she saw that Rachel wondered if she had ever been in an hotel before.

Quite as soon as dinner was over Mr. Walton sent up his card to her.

"I cannot see him," said Rachel. "I cannot see any one whom I have known in the old life!"

"But you must, my dear. When anyone calls to see you, and sends up a card, you must see them. It wouldn't be polite for you to refuse, you know."

Rachel looked at her in wonder.

"Surely the lady must be joking," she thought; but the joke was in such poor taste.

"Of course you're going down to see the gent," she declared.

A sudden idea came to her.

"I want you to take a message down to him for me, if you will."

"In that case I cannot very well refuse," said Rachel, slowly. She had said to herself that it would be wiser for her to avoid Philip Walton. He would be sure to ask her why she left home, and every word he would say would be like opening the old wound.

She was not her own mistress now. She must do as this lady directed, even though it cost her heart a terrible pang. In Philip Walton's eyes the girl looked lovelier than she ever did before. He said to himself that he must win her if it lay in mortal power.

After delivering Mrs. Grant's message Rachel would have excused herself to Philip Walton, and left him; but this would not have suited him at all. He appeared not to notice her anxiety to depart.

She never knew just how it happened, but she found herself telling him all about how miserable she was because her husband had left her and fled with another. He wondered if she would remember that he had met her on the road at the very time the elopement had taken place. But no; she had no recollection of him whatever at the time. "It is so much the better," he concluded.

"Try and forget his unfaithfulness to you," he declared. "Your life is too young and fair to be clouded by such a memory. Let the world see that it has not killed you."

"But it has killed me," she answered, lowly.

"That would be very sweet for your rival to know," he declared. "Every groan that came to your lips would bring a smile to hers," he declared. "Be brave, and let them see you do not care. They have kept track of you; they know where you are," he declared.

"Do you believe they know that?"

"I am sure of it," he answered. "Why, do you know that at this moment your husband and Daphne are in this very town?"

He saw that the words had struck her as lightning strikes a fair sweet flower. She shivered for a moment, then she controlled herself by a mighty effort.

"Are—are you quite sure?" she gasped.

"I have the best of evidence—my own eyes," he said. "I saw them only this afternoon out driving together. He was showing her the sights of the city."

Rachel listened to this like one turned to stone. Here, in this very town! The words seemed to burn into her very brain in letters of fire.

"You must keep up, Rachel," he added. "Do not let your cruel rival triumph over you. You must be too proud-spirited for that. I want you to remember always that if you need a friend, do not be afraid to call upon me. You will never find that I am wanting."

Rachel's eyes brimmed over with tears.

"You are very kind to me, Mr. Walton," she murmured. "Always believe me grateful to you while life lasts."

She could say no more, for her emotion quite overcame her; her heart bent in great straining throbs, and the busy world outside seemed to stand still.

"Yes, I will do everything in my power to try to forget that dark past," she murmured, "though it was the greatest sorrow that ever could have come to me."

"It was a terrible wrong done you," Philip Walton said, vehemently.

He saw her face grow white as death, and her bosom heave convulsively. But she was too proud to allow the tears to come to her eyes, and for the first time since their acquaintance he pitied her for this most unfortunate affair, over which her young heart was battling. Still this did not make him forego his purpose of winning her for his own at all hazards.

After a moment's pause she turned to him, coldly proud, like a beautiful statue carved in marble.

"The whole world will soon know the truth, that my husband has left me for another," she murmured. "I do not want people's pity; that would kill me. I shall have to struggle through it somehow. I wish it would kill me; but, alas! it will not. One must live and struggle on, no matter what the end may be."

He thought best not to alarm her by saying too much to her at one time. There were other days wherein he could broach the subject that was uppermost in his mind. He bid her good-bye, and Rachel went slowly and sadly to her room again.

Mrs. Grant rallied her upon her sad looks.

"You ought to look delighted having such a nice admirer."

"You are very much mistaken," said Rachel, bravely. "He is simply an acquaintance of mine, and nothing more."

"That's what all the young ladies declare," she said, with a laugh. "I hope that I won't lose you quite as soon as I have found you."

"If you mean you think that I will marry I will tell you right now that can never be—never! Never while the sun gives light or the world moves."

"Oh, dear me! What a determined young lady you are!"

The next day, and the next, Philip Walton managed to see Rachel and the widow, once in the spacious dining-room, and again in the corridor, as they were going up to their apartments.

He did not weary Rachel with his attentions, he simply bowed and passed on. Rachel would never have believed it was for her sake he was stopping at that hotel, and that he had arranged for her coming and her stay there all beforehand, while she believed herself the paid companion of the gay widow.

Before Rachel had been twenty-four hours with Mrs. Grant she came to one conclusion, and that was that she must have been some young girl out at service when she married, as she certainly did not know the usages of good society.

CHAPTER LIV.

PAUL and Daphne in the same town, happy in each other's love!

Rachel thought over those words by night and by day, until it seemed to her that the very knowledge would kill her. She might meet them in the street at any time; she might meet them out driving. If this were the case, she believed she would go mad—her heart would break then and there.

On several occasions Philip Walton offered to escort Mrs. Grant and herself, and Rachel noticed

that Mrs. Grant always acquiesced with the greatest delight.

"She is in love with him, and he cares for her," was her mental comment; and she wondered what Mr. Walton, so refined and gentlemanly, could see to admire in this flashy young widow, who was not so particular about her grammar as she was about her dresses.

The upshot of the whole affair was that at the end of the first fortnight Jennie Grant fell desperately in love with Philip Walton, despite the fact that she knew he was in love with the pretty Rachel, and despite the fact that she gave him no encouragement.

"Now, why couldn't I get him instead of her?" she wondered, looking under her eyelids at Rachel. "She's a lady, and he knows I am only a working-woman; the odds make the difference, I suppose."

She hated Rachel for her pretty ways. And then, too, it became noised in the hotel that Rachel was the young widow, and she the paid companion.

She was fairly speechless with rage when the chamber-maid told her what the guests were saying.

"The crazy things!" she cried. "They don't know a real lady when they see one!"

Her face flushed a burning red, and she hated Rachel after that with a deadly hatred.

If she had but dared, she would have ordered Rachel about before people; but she could not antagonise her, lest she should take it into her head to leave her, and then she would have to give up her position and her life at the hotel, and go back to the big cloak emporium in which she had slaved so many years.

She gnashed her teeth and clenched her hands. No; the life she was leading she could not relinquish until she was obliged to.

She took the wisest course, and was very pleasant with Rachel.

"If she should take it into her head to marry that wealthy gent I would be glad to be companion to her, and live nicely. Of course, it would be a big come-down; but not so much of a one as to step back and sell cloaks to people again. My only chance to keep up this luxury is to try and cut her out. If she didn't have such a pretty face it would have been easier for me, for I am sure he would like me if it hadn't been for her."

At that particular time an event happened which was destined to change the current of many lives.

It came to the ears of Jennie Grant that a whole family living in a secluded part of the city were suffering from a malignant contagious disease. It was then that a terrible temptation came to her—a temptation so great that for a moment it almost took her breath away. Why not send Rachel there with a small basket of fruit and flowers, requesting her to remain beneath that roof, administering to the wants of the sufferers, until she should come there?

Then the after part would be plain enough sailing. Rachel would come out of the affair terribly scarred, if she came out at all. Yes, that was a grand scheme.

So fully had this idea taken possession of Mrs. Grant that she could not rest by night or by day until after she had put it into execution.

Rachel listened to her story about the large suffering family with the deepest of sympathy. She acquiesced at once when Jennie Grant told her that she had decided to send her there with a few little delicacies for them.

She walked into the trap as thoughtlessly as the fabled fly walked into the spider's web, eagerly setting out for her destination with a light heart.

Jennie Grant saw her depart with eyes fairly gleaming with delight.

"So, so, pretty Rachel," she muttered, "we will see if you look as bonny when you return! They will not let you leave that place after you enter it for many a long weary week. I will say that you went there of your own accord; it will not occur to them to doubt my word. I will be all sympathy with you, and in the end, if I play my cards right, I may win the handsome gent, providing Daphne don't step in—the sly cat!

I'll serve her much the same way as I did the other girl. After being again to hotel life, I'm not going back to beggary without making a desperate struggle."

Meanwhile Rachel entered the cab which Mrs. Grant had ordered for her, and was whirling rapidly away towards the opposite part of the city.

"Poor souls! sick unto death!" she murmured. "How they will fight for their poor, miserable lives, as though they were worth everything to them, and perhaps they will die, sorrowing to leave this world, while I—ah, me! what would I not give to be in their place!" She thought of these lines,—

"God made the rich, and He made the poor,
Yet I never can quite understand
Why the path of one He strews with flowers,
And the path of the others with sand."

For some time Rachel rode motionless in the carriage, her thoughts busy with the past, her emotions deep and tender, as she surveyed the situation of the family who were in such sore need of kindly help.

As she traversed street after street the faces which passed her in the vehicles whirling past were all strangers to her, and a feeling of desolation swept over her as she thought of her loneliness among strangers.

"Let me think of Paul, who was so faithless to me, for just five minutes, as I first knew him. Five minutes is not much to take out of a lifetime, but it will make me, oh, so happy!"

In thinking of his every little kindness from beginning to end she quite forgot the mission she had started out upon—forgot everything, the whole world—remembering only him who had been so near her, and yet was now so far, who had so cruelly deserted her.

Rachel prayed compassionately for him, although she was unconscious of it.

"I may never see him again in this world," she murmured, "and yet I am foolish enough to love him so! But it makes me so happy to think of him, to make myself believe that it is not true—his falseness—that I have only tortured my brain for a false rumour, of which he is guiltless in the sight of Heaven."

A thousand times over would this poor girl have shouldered the blame for him if she could. The prayer would be on her lips until the day she died, that Heaven would let him prove himself innocent of the terrible sin that was laid at his door, before he was called to the judgment bar to answer for his sins.

Watching anxiously out upon the dust-covered road, Rachel was attracted by a stylishly-equipped vehicle which came dashing along in an opposite direction.

At first the lady who was seated within was so indistinct that Rachel did not at first recognise her; then, as the bright, glittering equipage came nearer her, she leaned breathlessly forward, her whole soul concentrated in her gaze, her eyes strained in that direction, upon the face that she knew but too well.

The carriage bowed along past her, and Rachel, leaning breathlessly forward, gazed like one fascinated into the eyes of the occupant of that carriage.

It was Daphne, her false sister, who glanced at her mockingly, then turned her head in another direction.

A gentleman sat beside her, his head bowed low on his breast, as if in deep thought. She could not tell who he was—whether it was Paul, or not.

She wished to Heaven that she could die then and there. This blow seemed too much for her.

Rachel dropped the flowers that she was carrying to the sick family. They lay there crushed and withered, reminding her of her own crushed life.

Then she drew down the curtains of the vehicle, and wept out bitter, scalding tears behind that friendly screen, and they seemed to ease her heavy heart a little.

Was it only her imagination, or had the horses come to an abrupt stop? Suddenly the driver alighted, and came to the carriage-door with a white, scared face.

"I dare go no farther, miss. The inmates of this house have a contagious sickness. You can get out, but I must return."

CHAPTER LV.

RACHEL HESITATED.

"It will not matter to me," she said, quietly. "I do not fear the contagion."

The man looked at her wonderingly. So young and beautiful, and so fearless! Her words surprised him.

The more he looked at her the more it occurred to him that he had seen her somewhere before; but he could not think where. The dark hair, the beautiful grey eyes, everything about her seemed strangely familiar to him.

All in a moment it occurred to him,—

"Great heavens, miss!" he cried, breaking in upon her reverie, "surely you can't be Miss Rachel Hilton!"

"Yes, I am Rachel—not Miss Hilton, but Mrs. Verrill. And you are—"

"Oh, Miss Rachel, don't you remember me?" I am one of the boys who used to work on your uncle's farm."

One glance at his face—it was changed now—and she did remember him.

"Sam," she said, "are you the boy Sam?"

"Yes," he answered, delighted at being recognized. "Oh, Miss Rachel"—he still persisted in calling her that—"don't you think of endangering your life by going into that place! Let me prevail upon you not to do so. You're awfully good-hearted, I know; but it wouldn't help those poor people by making such a sacrifice for them."

Then it suddenly dawned upon him that she had told him that she was married. The name—Verrill—ah, yes, that was the name of the handsome young lawyer who used to come to the farm most every day.

"I beg your pardon for making so bold, but did you marry the young lawyer that used to come up to the farm so much?"

A spasm of pain came over her face for an instant.

"Yes," she answered in a low voice. "Do you remember him?"

He laughed a little low laugh.

"Oh, yes, ma'am; I remember him well."

Suddenly he stopped short and looked at the girl.

"It isn't very long ago since I saw him, ma'am," he went on. "He had just got over a great sick spell," he continued, "and, Miss Rachel, somebody said that he was a-looking for a runaway wife. Surely you did not run away from the young gentleman, did you, Miss Rachel? You're not the kind of lady to do anything like that."

Rachel's lip trembled. Oh! how her heart longed for someone to tell her grief to, even though it were only this poor, humble caddy who had worked for her relatives on the farm.

"Sam," she said, "I will tell you the truth. My husband left me; he went away with another woman, and I—I came away where no one would know me."

The caddy gave a low whistle. He could not understand how a man in his right senses could leave so beautiful a young lady as Miss Rachel. He wished that he knew the whole story. He dared not ask her to tell him the exact truth, but he thought that there must be something terribly wrong somewhere.

He waited until she told him the story of her own accord, then he ejaculated quickly:

"I believe there is something wrong, Miss Rachel. The young lawyer seemed powerfully fond of you—everyone could see that."

"Some men's love change after they marry you," said Rachel, bitterly.

"Not a sensible man, as the young lawyer was."

She shook her head.

"You were so very fond of him," said Sam. "It is too bad, for all the people who knew you said that you would make such a nice couple."

I think it will be all right, Miss Rachel; you two will come together again."

"No," she answered, shaking her head decisively; "it can never be. We are separated as far apart as though one of us lay dead!"

While she had been talking a strange plan had entered the thick brain of Sam.

In those other days of which he had spoken he had saved Paul Verrell's life. He had stepped before a train which he had supposed was not to start for some time. An unlucky slip, and in an instant he was lying prostrate across the frozen, slippery tracks.

At that very moment the whistle of the engine rang and the train moved on. The engineer did not see him, but Sam saw him, and in an instant had sprung to Paul Verrell's rescue, caught him in his arms, and sprung with him into safety.

Paul's gratitude knew no bounds. "You have saved my life," he said, "you shall be handsomely rewarded by my uncle."

Sam shook his head. He was very poor, but he would not accept money for a service like that.

"My good fellow," said Paul, with great emotion, "your nobleness has touched me greatly indeed. Few men would refuse to be recompensed. Always remember that from this time on I am your life-long friend. If you are ever in need, come to me, and if it is in my power to assist you it shall be done. Ask any favour of me, and I will do all in my power to grant it."

All that scraps flashed through his mind now, and a thought came to him.

"I will put it into execution, for I am sure that Rachel loves him as much now as in the old days."

He kept his own counsel. "Will you be long in the town, Miss Rachel?" he asked, wistfully. "And are you stopping at the hotel?"

"Yes, I expect to be there a fortnight," said Rachel; "perhaps longer, I cannot tell. If I am not to go to see those sick people you may as well drive me back to the hotel."

"Good-bye, Miss Rachel," he said, wistfully, as he left her.

"Good-bye," said the girl, little dreaming what the boy's thoughts were as he watched her out of sight.

"Poor, pretty Miss Rachel," he thought. "Sam will do all that he can to bring you two together again."

Jennie Grant was shocked when Rachel entered the hotel bearing the fruits and flowers in her hand.

"Nonsense," she declared, when Rachel told her why she had not delivered the basket. "You are much more scared than hurt, taking the word of some superstitious old back-driver. If it were not that I need you for something else I would have you call another hack and have you take those things there."

It rather surprised Rachel that Mrs. Grant should be so very anxious to have her go, if it was as dangerous as the back-driver claimed.

"I wouldn't mention anything about it to Mr. Walton," went on the woman, carelessly. "He doesn't believe in sending fruits and flowers to folks."

"The little fool!" said the woman, when she found herself alone. "This is a pretty how-d'ye-do! The girl seems to be living a charmed life. I suppose it is best for me to bide my time. If I cannot get rid of her in one way I will in another."

Although Jennie Grant pretended to Rachel's face to be very fond of her, some subtle instinct seemed to warn the girl to beware of her. The more she saw of her the less she seemed to care for her.

She saw that Jennie Grant was all outside show. Her dresses were flashy. As far as the eye could see she was well gowned, but the balance of her clothes, that the eye couldn't see, were cheap and common enough.

She had none of the fine linen and dainty lace that the hearts of refined women so delight to revel in.

Her speech, too, was not at all times as dignified as it might be.

She realized that Philip Walton did not

admire her. She often saw him turn away from her with an impatient frown on his lips. Man-like, he discovered at once that she was in love with him, and he resented it accordingly.

"A man can never get a woman of this sort to do anything for him without it ends in her falling in love with him," he thought, his brow darkening angrily.

He had made no headway with Rachel. He stood greatly in awe of this girl with the pure white soul, who still loved so devotedly the husband whom she believed to be so faithless to her.

But for all that he could not give up his thought of winning her. He did not know that a woman's love could be so enduring. He had always thought it as light and changeable as the seasons. Women who had loved their husbands very dearly had been known to marry a second time after they had lost the objects of their adoration.

Would not Rachel turn to him, sooner or later, for consolation, as the sun-flower turns to the sun, after a great storm has bent it earthward?

Yes, he was sure she would. It was all he could do to refrain from uttering words of love to her.

He held himself in check with an iron hand. No, not yet—not yet must he breathe the words that seemed to force their way from his heart to his lips.

He had received a summons from America—very important business required him there—and he made up his mind that Rachel should go with him.

Jennie Grant should be the one to take her there.

She might refuse to cross the sea. There was only one thing that was left for him to do, and that was to force her to do so by fair means or foul.

But when Philip Walton commenced to mature his plans the words of the old proverb never occurred to him,—

"Man proposes, but Heaven disposes."

(To be continued.)

THE MISTRESS OF BARRONS COURT.

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(Continued from page 516.)

"It is a very good thing that 'all that you know' has come out now instead of after we had married each other—which we should have done but for the word that I heard that sent me to the ten-acre field after you," Rosalind said, gravely. "Chance brought me the news that you were with another woman, and I was jealous, I suppose; at any rate, I was indignant, and wanted to see for myself. My curiosity was almost as fatal as Fatima's," she added, trying to keep from crying, though she had hard work to keep herself from so doing. "We will shake hands and part, cousin, as Hamlet says. You may leave grannie to me, I will manage her. Only be true to the woman you do love and trust me, and the future may not be so hard for you as you think. It shall not be if I can help it."

Lady St. Quentin angled well from seeing the cousins drive up amicably together. But Rosie would tell her nothing, and Rupert only went to his room for some things he had left there, and took himself away again. And to her astonishment, her granddaughter announced her intention of going back to Norchester after lunch.

"My dear child! twice in one day!" she said. "You will be knocked up."

"It is business, grannie," Rosalind said, trying to speak merrily, but failing signally. "I want to see Mr. Trentham."

Mr. Trentham was the family lawyer, and had known Rosalind all her life, and respected her mightily—she was so superior to the general run of young ladies.

"Can't it wait till Mr. Armytage is better?" she asked; but Rosalind shook her head.

"No, it can't," she replied, "it must be

done at once. Besides, it is private business of my own."

Two hours later the young mistress of Barrons Court was coming out of the lawyer's office in Norchester with a more satisfied face. The great man himself was attending her, and said a few words to her at parting.

"Nothing but your signature will be necessary," he said; "and I shall do myself the honour of bringing the necessary document to Barrons Court to-morrow."

"Thank you very much indeed!" she said, as she drove away and directed her servant to take her to a street she named and wait for her.

She made her way to the house where Violet Mansergh lived, and stood on the step with a wildly-beating heart, and a vague wish in her mind that she had not come there at all.

"Take that to Miss Mansergh, please," she said to the dingy little servant, "and tell her I should be glad to speak to her for a minute."

The girl looked astonished at the card she took from the richly-dressed lady, and retreated, after asking her into a small parlour scrupulously clean though meagrely furnished.

"Poor Rupert!" she thought, "does his taste lead him to a girl from such a house as this?"

The girl returned, and led her to a pretty room on the first floor with which even her fastidious taste could find no fault, and saying shortly "the lady, miss," shut the door and left her face to face with her rival.

"As beautiful as an angel," the words came back to her as she looked at the graceful girl who rose hastily to meet her.

Anything like Violet Mansergh's beauty she had never seen, though the exquisite face was white and drawn now, and the eyes were heavy with tears shed and unshed.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "I am afraid you are ill, but I had a word to say to you. You do not know me, perhaps, I am—"

"Oh, yes, I know you," was the quiet reply, "you are Miss Ormsby—Lady St. Quentin I should say—his wife."

"I am no one's wife, Miss Mansergh," Rosalind said, in some surprise. "Who has told you such a fable as that?"

"He said so in the wood that day—the man who saved your life, that was his word—wife, and it has rung in my ears ever since, I think, and I loved him so. I believed that in all the wide earth there was not a more honourable man than Rupert St. Clair. How I was to know that he was Lord St. Quentin, and another woman's husband?"

She burst into passionate tears, and Rosalind let her weep for a little while. Poor girl, she had been shut up with her own thoughts ever since the day of the adventure with the bull, and she had driven herself well-nigh mad with her miserable broodings.

"If Mr. Armytage used the word it was in great excitement," Rosalind said, gently. "He meant it in the sense that my cousin and I were supposed to be betrothed—his wife that was to be. I certainly was, and knew of no impediment in the way of our marriage. I am glad I have come to know that it cannot be ere it is too late. Rupert loves you, Miss Mansergh, and I cannot think that he intentionally kept his rank or position from you—he is generally very open."

She guessed rightly.

It had been a matter of accident, in the first place that had caused Rupert to call himself St. Clair.

She had called him by the name in a mistake, and he had allowed the mistake to pass till he discovered that it was convenient to have a feigned name, and he had never undeceived her.

"He was playing with me," Violet Mansergh said. "I was his toy to be flung aside when he had found something better worth his while to dally with. I hope I shall never look into his wicked face again in this world."

"And I hope you will—I think you will. Can I not plead for him? I have been the cause of your unhappiness, and I am truly sorry for it. I came here to say, forgive him, and forgive me for

stepping between you unintentionally as I did."

Violet's face was hidden, and the tears were flowing.

"I thought I had wept my heart out," she said, presently. "I thought there were no more tears to be shed. Do you know that I was very nearly throwing myself into the river as I came home from the wood the other evening? I saw what I must have seemed in the eyes of everyone who knew anything of our meetings—a light girl who was not ashamed to throw her good name to the winds at the bidding of another woman's husband."

"No one could look into your face and think that for a moment," Rosalind said eagerly. "Come and see me, Miss Mansergh, we are not rivals. My cousin and I have settled our affairs amicably. He is as free as air, and true to you in his heart as he has always been. He is weak and vacillating in many things and easily led, but I think you have his leading strings in your hands."

Violet shook her head.

"It is I who should keep out in the cold," she said, sadly. "I did not know—how should I—what I was doing? I thought only of his goodness and gentleness to me and of my own undying love. That will never die, no, not if he were to marry you or any one else to-morrow! Ah, forgive me. I am unmaidenly and wicked to talk like that. I know, but he was all to me. There is so little that is bright in my life, and he brought the sunshine."

"And there shall be more sunshine yet," said Rosalind. "Trust me, I am only a girl, like yourself, Miss Mansergh, but I have seen more into things, perhaps, and seem older than I am. Come to Barrons Court on Monday and see me, and you shall see if I cannot conjure up a tiny gleam of that same brightness to illuminate what I want to say to you."

CHAPTER IX.

Violet thought over what Miss Ormby had said to her, and finally made up her mind to go to Barrons Court, and see what came of it. Her father was likely to be away for another week at least; and she felt, poor girl, as if she should go mad, there in the place alone with her thoughts.

The young lady was very kind and pleasant, and had declared that all was over between her cousin and herself. That would make no difference, Violet thought. She could never care to see Rupert St. Quentin again, and he would think no more of her.

He might have told his cousin what he did on the spur of the moment; but he would never think of making her Lady St. Quentin—she could not expect that. She tried to be thankful that their parting had come when it had, before she had committed herself irrevocably.

A note from Miss Ormby was put into her hand the morning after that young lady called, bidding her come to Barrons Court about one o'clock. "In time for luncheon with me," Rosalind added, and there was no refusing the gentle mandate.

She walked over from Norchester, and was admitted with a respect and courtesy that plainly showed the servants had had their orders about her, and shown into Rosalind's pretty boudoir, where the heiress was waiting for her.

"I was so afraid you would not come," she said. "I wanted you especially to-day. You and I are going to be friends, you know, and I mean to make you forget all that has troubled you, and that before you go away from here to-night. We shall lunch together, and then I must leave you for a little while; I have a lot of business on hand to-day. But there are plenty of books and the piano. Do you play?"

"Oh, yes, it is my one pleasure at home. I have not had much teaching, but I am very fond of it."

"So am I, and I am guilty of liking ballads and old-fashioned music. You will find any amount there in that cabinet. You must make yourself at home, and do just what you like; no one will interfere with you."

It was difficult not to be at home with Rosalind Ormby, she was so perfectly frank and unaffected; and Violet felt brighter and happier than she had done since that miserable day in the wood.

The two girls lunched together and made each others' acquaintance, and Rosalind was surprised and charmed with the simple, unaffected good breeding of Rupert's *anamorata*. After lunch Rosalind went down stairs, bidding Violet amuse herself, and joined her grandmother in the library.

"What did you send me such a pompous message for, Rosie?" asked that lady. "Could not you have come to me in my room?"

"Well, I dare say I could, grannie," the girl replied; "but I thought dear old Vereker would be there, and the uplifting of two pairs of hands and eyes would be more than I could stand in my present frame of mind."

"What do you mean? But, there, it is no use asking. I suppose I shall find out some time."

"You shall know it in a minute, Rupert and I—"

"Have quarrelled. I knew it, I was sure of it—his folly could have no other ending."

"We have not quarrelled, grannie, we are the best of friends; but we have thought it best to end the farce of our engagement. Don't look so grieved about it,"—as a pained expression came into the sweet old face. "Rupert will not be master of Barrons Court—but here he comes."

Lord St. Quentin came in, looking rather disturbed at his grandmother's presence. He had calculated on seeing Rosie by herself, and leaving her to tell the tale afterwards when he was safe away. He was a terrible coward, and there was no other word for it.

"I have kept the time, Rosie," he said, with assumed indifference. "I see you have told grannie that we don't pull together; and—"

"Yes, I have told her that much," Rosalind replied. "But I have not told her why, dear. Grannie, Rupert loves some one else better than me. We were blind and stupid not to see that before; and you must forgive him and say 'welcome my daughter,' to his wife; she is very lovely and worthy of your love."

"I shall do no such thing!" Lady St. Quentin said, angrily. "Rupert is a fool, and so are you. Some one else, indeed! How does he propose to live? I may have kept him all these years—I don't propose to keep a wife and family as well!"

"You will not be asked to do so," Rosalind said, putting a folded paper in her cousin's hand. "Dear Rupert, it is only what papa meant to do. I know it; I have heard him say as much many a time. It is all in order; the lawyers have managed it for me. Grannie will be satisfied now, and there will be no need of considering how you and your wife are to live."

She stopped suddenly and burst into tears. She had strung herself up into an overwrought frame of mind, and, the effort over, she rather broke down.

"It is leaving myself out in the cold rather," she said, with a smile, when her little burst was over. "It is papa's legacy to my cousin; remember that—not my gift."

Rupert St. Quentin looked at the paper in amazement. It was a free gift of an income sufficient to keep him and his wife in comfort at least—all signed and sealed, and ready to be entered on at once.

"Rosie!" he exclaimed, "how could you? What shall I say? What can I do?"

"Do! Do nothing but enjoy it. Grannie, it is nothing; don't cry!" For Lady St. Quentin had broken into the rare tears of old age. "It is not a quarter of what I have to enjoy on my own account; and Rupert has a right to it. Poor papa's will was all a mistake; the lawyers think so, too, and say that I am right in what I have done."

An unmitigated fib on Miss Ormby's part. The gentlemen in question had combated her resolution to enrich her cousin with all their might, and told her that her father had made his will in perfect soundness of mind, with

the full intention of not leaving his lordship anything at all; and it was only when she declared her intention of going to some one else at once that they were brought, as she called it, to their senses, and prepared the necessary documents.

"Dear Rosie!" Rupert said; "what can I say to you? How can I thank you?"

"You can thank me by persuading grannie there that the world is not coming to an end quite!" the girl replied, with a quiver of her rosy lips. "I have not done with you yet, sir. I have another present for you, and one that you must take at my hands, remember."

"What is it?"

"Well, it was too large for me to put in an envelope," Rosalind said, laughing now, and her face beaming over with pleasure; "I have left it upstairs in my boudoir. Go and fetch it, and show it to grannie, and then everything will be complete."

She ran away and hid herself in her own room, and cried out her excitement by herself, while Rupert went to her pretty boudoir and made peace with Violet, and took her to Lady St. Quentin, and made a clean breast to his grandmother of all his folly and deceit.

People were sorely exercised in their minds when, some weeks after all this—when Norman Armytage was going about again, and the affair of the bull was well-nigh forgotten—there was a quiet wedding in a Norchester church—the bridegroom Lord St. Quentin, and the bride—not Rosalind Ormby.

So quiet had everything been kept that no one knew anything about it till the day arrived; and lo! Miss Ormby was one of the wedding party, and apparently perfectly satisfied with the proceedings.

"Miss Violet Mansergh, daughter of Captain Mansergh, R.A." was the style and title given to the bride by the papers, and it was no one's business to inquire any farther.

It came to be said that Rosalind had been jilted, and that she was wearing the willow; but the scandal died a natural death—as all scandals will if they have time enough given them.

Miss Ormby went abroad for a time after her cousin's wedding, and Barrons Court was left in charge of Norman Armytage. His father lingered on, but did not get any better, and the son had to keep the charge or give it to strangers.

All this is many years ago now. Lord St. Quentin is a respected, honoured man, high in office, and helped to hold his own by his clever, brilliant wife, whose house in town is the gathering place for all that is pleasant and clever in the literary and artistic world.

Barrons Court is not shut up now; it is one of the nicest of all country houses, and its bright mistress, and cheerful, managing master are beloved by their people in a fashionavouring of worship. Rosalind has kept her name; she is Mrs. Ormby, and her husband has taken her.

Very few people really knew who Mr. Armytage Ormby was before the heiress honoured him with her hand; but those who are ready to say that he was a nobody are obliged to confess that there is not a truer gentleman in all the land, nor one more worthy of a woman's love.

No one quite knows how the marriage came about. There are all sorts of stories afloat, that the young lady loved him when he was her steward, and that he saved her life, winning her hand as his reward.

Rosalind herself tells her intimate friends that she had to do the lovemaking herself, that Norman wouldn't have her till she popped the question for herself. Be that as it may, she did wisely in laying her fortune at his feet and taking him for her guide through life.

The revenues of Barrons Court have well-nigh doubled since Mr. Norman Armytage came to be master there; and though his seat in Parliament at the last election had cost him a tremendous sum in his eyes, his wife declares they could have afforded it if it had cost them three times as much, for marrying Norman was like putting her hand into a gold mine.

The head of the great bull adorns the entrance—

hall of Barrons court, for Rosalind declares the animal was a friend to her, for the few whispered words of the terrible afternoon gave her courage to do what she did when her game of cross-purposes with her cousin was over and she was free to tell her husband how dearly she loved him, and how cheerless life would be to her if he did not say "yes" when she asked him to marry her!

[THE END]

ISA HOWARD.

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ISA HOWARD was a tall, stately brunette, whose lovely Spanish beauty held all masculine hearts captive.

On this occasion her dress was of nun's veiling of the most delicate peach pink, well covered in flounces of dainty laces; her hat was white, and the parasol which she held in one little white-gloved hand, over her queenly head, was a mixture of silk and laces, in perfect keeping with her other adornments.

Her escort, who had just left her, was dark also; and her sparkling wit, with the coquetish glances she bestowed on him so freely from under the silken lashes, had the desired effect, for he flushed like a girl when he came to his friend's side, to tell him all she had said and done, as he always did, poor fellow!

His friend, Loyd Russell, was tall and fair, and, at thirty, boasted of being heart-whole and fancy free, saying he had passed unscathed through all the ordeals and traps of scheming mamma and marriageable daughters, while Charlie Dane, whom we have just mentioned, was in love, it seemed, with Isabel.

"Hallo, Charlie, old fellow!" said Loyd, rising and slapping him on the shoulder as he approached. "Who was that young lady who just left you, and who, it seems, had such perfect control over you as to make you blush and pale at her will?"

"Oh, that was Miss Howard! What do you think of her?" and he scanned Loyd's face.

"Well," said his companion, slowly, "I should judge from the young lady's looks that she was either in love, or pretending to be, with a certain young fellow by the name of Charlie Dane, who adores the very ground she walks on, and worships at her shrine of beauty as others have done, hoping to gain the prize in the end."

"Wouldn't you like to meet her?"

"I would, if it would render you any pleasure."

"Very well; I will tell her."

And Charlie turned away, gratified, while Loyd sought his own room, to make himself presentable.

Towards evening he strolled out on the beach, and saw a few yards ahead of him Charlie and Miss Howard, walking arm-in-arm, the former talking earnestly, and she drooping her head and laughing a low, little, silvery laugh, as was her wont.

As Loyd drew near Charlie stepped forward and introduced him.

Loyd bowed politely, and Isa frankly extended her hand, saying, in the sweetest voice he had ever heard,—

"I feel almost well acquainted, having heard you spoken of so frequently by your friend Mr. Dane."

He felt at ease at once, and wondered as he looked on the beautiful, dusky face, all smiles, roses, and bewitching dimples, how she could be so heartless as she was reputed to be, but determining not to become infatuated and be defeated in the end, as others were, he was coolly polite, and nothing more.

"What do you think of her?" asked Charlie, the next day.

"Well," Loyd returned, indifferently, "she is the most charming of her kind."

"Do you really think she is heartless?"

"So they say. The best thing for you to do, Charlie, is to try your fate."

"I mean to," he responded, with enthusiasm. "I can but fail, which is no worse than others have done."

About nine o'clock Loyd wandered out on the beach, feeling too restless to converse with the many ladies who required his attention when in their presence.

His thoughts wandered to Isa and Charlie, and he wondered if she would surrender this time and own her love for him, and then he wondered if she did love him.

The evening was very sultry, and as the atmosphere was oppressive on the beach he made his way to a rocky promontory that extended out over the still, dark waters.

Presently he heard the sound of approaching footsteps and voices, which he at once recognised as those of Isa and Charlie.

Greatly to his annoyance they seated themselves just beneath him on a rock.

Not wishing to overstep the bounds of good breeding by eavesdropping he quietly endeavoured to find some means of making his escape; but it was impossible, as he could not withdraw without being seen. So, muttering something that sounded like ill-luck, he was compelled to await the result of his unfortunate position.

"Isa," he heard Charlie say, "do you always intend to trifle with me?"

"Why, Mr. Dane, who said I was trifling?" And there was injured pride in her low, sweet voice.

She did love Charlie, then, after all, thought Loyd; and he felt that he was jealous—he who had never spoken to her but once. Why should he care?

"Isa, you do love me a little, dear! There is hope for me yet?"

"Yes; there is hope while life remains."

And though her voice sounded sweet there was cruelty in its tones.

"Isa, do you love me? I shall never ask you again."

Poor Charlie, he had come to the test! Loyd heard her laugh that same little laugh as she said, somewhat gently,—

"It's too bad, Charlie, if you are growing sentimental! I was just thinking this morning what a sensible fellow you were—never quoting poetry or going into tragedy, as seems natural to all your sex."

And again she laughed.

"Surely, Isa, you have given me every encouragement," he went on. "It is but natural that I should think you cared for me, is it not?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so. You men have the audacity to think anything."

But as he did not reply she felt sorry, for she quickly added,—

"And, besides, I do not expect to marry for some years yet; and when I do, I must console myself with a fair gentleman—for instance, Mr. Russell."

Loyd's heart gave a wild bound as she spoke his name; but he quickly stifled its throbbings, when he thought that, as she had finished her work with Charlie, she would doubtless like to get him in tow to befool him in the same way; but he determined to be on his guard, and ignore every charm.

"Well, then, Isa, this must be our farewell," and her lover stopped and extended his hand.

"Surely, Charlie, we can be friends," she said, in a surprised and injured voice.

"No," he returned, coldly, "it would neither be pleasant nor necessary for us to continue our friendship."

"Very well," she returned, haughtily, and turning from him, she swept away with the air of an insulted queen.

While Loyd, eavesdropper as he was, concealed himself till they disappeared from view, and then, rising from his uncomfortable position, returned to the hotel.

On entering his room he found Charlie sitting by the window, his face buried in his hands.

"What's the matter, old fellow?" he said, with assumed innocence, going to his friend's side, and placing his hands on his shoulders in true brotherly sympathy. "Has she refused you?"

Charlie only nodded, and Loyd consoled him by telling him that there were as good fish in the sea as ever were caught, and that he was by far too good for her.

Charlie did not tell him anything, but he was not over anxious, as he had heard everything, although unintentionally.

All night long Loyd was haunted by Isa's dark, false face, and it was nearly dawn before he found forgetfulness in sleep.

When he awoke the next morning the sun was streaming in through the open windows, and Charlie was busily engaged packing his trunk.

"What are you doing? You're not going home?" said Loyd, in surprise.

"No!" he said, in a strange, changed voice. "I am going to leave for other parts."

All efforts to reconcile him were useless, and he left the same day.

It was just twilight, and Loyd, feeling lonesome, wandered out on the beach, where he could see the ocean and hear its wild roar; and while standing and watching its dark waters, and thinking how far from him they were bearing Charlie, he felt a warm hand on his arm, and turning, beheld at his side Isa Howard, looking divine in creamy laces and a delicate jonquil shawl, which was thrown gracefully about her dainty shoulders.

For a few moments they stood gazing at each other; he drinking in the dark, dazzling beauty of this heartless creature, who doubtless had come to weave the coils of her fulsomeness about him since Charlie was no longer here.

She was the first to break the silence.

"Mr. Russell!" she said, timidly.

"I am that person," he replied, in cuttingly cold tones.

"Is it true that Mr. Dane has gone abroad?"

"It is!" he returned gruffly, looking over her head and utterly ignoring her presence.

"What were his reasons?" came from the quivering lips.

"I think you can best answer that question," he returned, almost savagely, as he turned and rested his eyes on her, and took in at a glance everything, from the blue-black hair, coiled low on the neck, to the tiny slippered feet.

"I don't see how I could have had anything to do with it," she answered, her dark eyes wandering over the wide expanse of ocean, as if in thought, while she nervously clasped and unclasped her shapely hands.

"Do you mean to say," he began harshly, "that you did not teach him to love you, and then led him on by your cruel smiles and false face, until you had him at your feet, and then laughed him to scorn as you did, and always will do with everyone who has the misfortune to cross your path?"

The bloom faded from her cheeks, and her dark, velvety eyes were full of tears.

"I did not love him," she said, vacantly.

"No," he returned, harshly, "you have no heart, but employ your time in destroying those of others."

"It is not my fault if other people love me," she said, sadly. "But I don't see what possible difference it can make to you."

And she raised her dark eyes to his face in a questioning gaze.

"No," he said, his voice trembling, "I suppose you do not know he was my friend, and that I have had the misfortune to love you too!"

And he turned away to conceal the emotion he really felt.

"Are you going?" she asked, gently.

"Yes," he returned, brokenly; "I, too, shall go away, and try to forget that I have ever met you."

And as he held out his hand she burst into tears, and clung to him, and begged him not to go.

"I love you, too!" she sobbed.

And Loyd Russell, who had always ignored the sex, actually found himself holding fast in his arms Isa Howard, who had surrendered at a moment's notice.

Years have since passed, and in sunny Italy Charlie has found a wife whose beauty is the

light of his life, while Loyd and Isa have a home, in the summer, where they first met.

And she often upbraids him for condemning her for not loving other people.

"For if I had," she says, in playful reproval, "I should never have had the honour of being Mrs. Loyd Russell."

WHAT IS LOVE?

—C—

IN answer to the question,—"What is love?" sixteen different persons testify as follows,—

The most interesting and pardonable of human weaknesses.

A mere delusion that has ruined many men.

An egotism of two.

A feeling of such exquisite tenderness that it is too sweet for comparison.

I don't know anything about it; don't think it amounts to much.

The sweetest and most passionate excitement known to man—binding together, by the strongest chords, sex, kindred and nations.

Don't know anything about it; I never was there.

It is something that no fellow can find out—yet all feel its power, more or less.

A sweet and delusive imagination only.

A dormant passion of the mind aroused by beauty or intellectual qualities of some one woman.

An undefinable principle which all people possess, and which lies at the very foundation of happiness.

A noble passion that envelopes our whole being, and shows itself in every thought, word and action.

True bliss—void of fancy—of happiest happiness.

A feeling that takes root in the heart, and is only made perfect when it enters the soul.

A latent faculty in the mind that, when aroused, glows with a radiance that illuminates the gloomiest mind and yields a power of influence that is unequalled.

One of the worst diseases of the heart.

THE atmosphere of a household has everything to do with the development of its inmates, and one can hardly expect to find soft-mannered, delicately sensitive young people brought up under the influence of irascible or bickering or choleric parents. For their sakes the disputatious and irritable should master themselves, lest the evil crop of seeds sown in moments of unreason should rise, like the fabled dragon's teeth, in a harvest of armed men whom no restraints may be strong enough to repress.

CONCISE TALK.—Few men understand how to express their ideas forcibly and concisely. If one has plenty of time at his disposal one can make himself understood, but too often the number of words used is out of all proportion to the ideas. The peculiarly nervous temperament, and the limited vocabulary of most half-educated men lead them to express themselves in a vague, verbose fashion. They are too long in getting at the pith of what they are talking about; and when they reach this point their inability to remember the two or three words that would put their thoughts in a compact, intelligible form, compels them to use ten, where one, were it the right one, would have been sufficient. Not infrequently this vagueness is a cloak assumed for the moment to cover important information or ill-defined ideas regarding the subject that is being discussed. This false pride, which shows itself in a desire to seem to know something about that of which one knows little or nothing, is the cause of much loose, meaningless talk which may serve its purpose temporarily but which more often leaves a listener in such a state of uncertainty that he is as likely as not to attribute his doubts to his own dulness. Honesty, simplicity and exactness are not qualities that are conspicuous in the conversation of most men we meet.

FACETIÆ.

WHY is a hatter measuring caps like a ship overturning? Because he's cap-sizing.

THE speaker of the house—Your mother-in-law.

IF the hearts of two wedded giants beat as one, what a terrible thumping there must be.

It is very unlucky to have thirteen at a table, particularly when there is only enough to satisfy the appetites of ten.

A COQUETTE is a woman without any heart that makes a fool of a man that ain't got any head.

A CLERGYMAN removing from one city to another marked a large box containing his sermons, "Keep dry." They did.

SOMEONE who believes that "brevity is the soul of wit," writes: "Don't eat stale Quibblers. They will W up."

"I AM to tell the truth." "Yes," interrupted an acquaintance, "but you are a very bad shot."

SMALL BOY: "Pa, did you know me long before you married her?" Pa: "I didn't. I didn't know her till long after I married!"

A DANDY on shore is annoying to many people, but a *scud* of the sea sickens everybody.

"JULIA, there is no moon. Will you meet me at the gaslight corner?" "No, John; I am no gas-meter."

SHE (sentimentally): "What poetry there is in a fire!" He (sadly): "Yes; a great deal of my poetry has gone there."

THE last thing from an impassioned printer to his sweetheart,— "Would you were a note of exclamation and I a parenthesis (!)."

"TELL your mistress that I have torn the curtain," said a boarder to a female domestic. "Very well, sir; mistress will put it down as extra rent."

"Do you want fast colours?" asked the draper. "No, indeed," she answered, with a pretty blush. "My husband doesn't like anything fast."

DOLAN: "Are you troubled with the toothache?" Moler (in agony): "Great Caesar! Did you ever know a person to have a toothache without being troubled with it?"

HARRY: "I cannot offer you wealth, Marie; my brains are all the fortune I possess." Marie: "Oh, Harry, if you are as badly off as that, I am afraid papa will never give his consent."

THE COUNT: Ah, meez, you climb so Matter-horn! Zat was a foot to be proud of. She: "Pardon me, count, but you mean feat." "O-o-h! You climb it more an' once."

"Oh, Tommy, that was abominable in you to eat your little sister's share of the cake!"

"Why," said Tommy, "didn't you tell me, ma, that I was always to take her part?"

"YOUR behaviour is most singular, sir," said a young lady to a gentleman who had just stolen a kiss. "If that is all," said he, "I will soon make it plural."

AN American paper says, "We have adopted the eight-hour system in this office. We commence work at eight o'clock in the morning and close at eight in the evening."

"WELL, Pat, how's trade?" asked a stout person, addressing a grave-digger. "Poorly, surr, entirely; shure we haven't buried a livin' soul this three weeks!" replied Pat.

"TAKE a wing!" gushed a young and pompous upstart, extending his arm to a sensible young lady, at the close of a prayer meeting. "Not of a gander," she quietly replied, and walked with her mother.

Q.C. (in Court): "Doctors sometimes make mistakes, don't they?" M.D.: "The same as lawyers." "But doctors' mistakes are buried six feet under ground," said the lawyer. "Yes," said the doctor, "and lawyers' mistakes swing six feet in the air."

A BEAUTIFUL girl, coming from the field, was told by her cousin that she looked as fresh as a daisy kissed by the dew. "No, indeed," was the simple reply; "that wasn't his name."

PASTOR: "Do you ever play with bad little boys, Johnnie?" Johnnie: "Yes, sir." Pastor: "I'm surprised, Johnnie! Why don't you play with good little boys?" Johnnie: "Their mamas won't let 'em."

MRS. HOPEFUL: "Is my boy improving?" Professor of Penmanship: "He is getting worse. His writing is now so bad no living soul can read it." "How lovely! The darling! He'll be a great author some day."

CHARLES (playfully): "How much really did that hat cost, Jennie?" Jennie: "If you really want to inspect my millinery bills, Charles, there is a way to do it." And what else could Charles do but propose on the spot?

"WELL, Mary," said a mother to her daughter, who had been after a situation as servant, "did you get it?" "Not I," was the retort. "I wouldn't work for such mean people; two of them were actually playing on my piano."

ARITHMETIC TEACHER: "Now, Tommy, you have finished the tables. Twelve quires make what?" Robbie: "I know. They would make an awful row if they were all like the one at our church."

AMATEUR TENOR: "Did you hear me sing last night?" Frankman: "No. The fact is, I got into the jam at the door and couldn't hear anything." "What! Was there such a crowd trying to get in as that?" "No—to get out."

"WHAT did the doctor say was the matter with you?" "He said he didn't know."

"Well, what doctor are you going to next?"

"None. When a doctor dares to make such an admission as that, he must be about as high in the profession as he can get."

"WHEN I grow up I'll be a man, won't I?" asked a little boy of his mother. "Yes, my son; but if you want to be a man you must be industrious at school, and learn how to behave yourself." "Why, mamma, do the lazy boys turn out to be women when they grow up?"

HE (just accepted): "You say you were never engaged before?" She: "Yes." He: "How is that? I thought all women always had three or four engagements." She (guilelessly): "Well, I presume I shall, too. You see, this is the first chance I have had."

"THE gentleman that came to see papa said I was one of the most intelligent children he ever saw," said little Jack. "Indeed," said the proud mother. "Did you recite 'The Village Blacksmith' for him?" "No, mammy. I refused to."

MISTRESS: "Your character is satisfactory, but I'm very particular about one thing. I wish my servants to have plenty; but I do not allow any waste." Applicant: "O ma'am, sure an' I'd eat and drink till I busted, 'm, rather than waste anything, 'm."

Two young ladies and Mr. Thaddeus O'Grady were conversing on age, when one of them put the home question: "Which of us do you think is the elder, Mr. O.G.?" "Sure," replied the gallant Irishman, "you both look younger than each other."

A GENTLEMAN travelling homeward from Atlanta met an aged negro, whose hat was encircled with the crepe of grief. "Have you lost a relative, my friend?" he said. "Yes, Massa." "Near or distant?" "Pretty distant, Massa, about four-and-twenty miles!"

It is hard to be good early. A mother recently took her four-year-old boy to church, but had to be constantly chiding him for speaking out in meeting. He finally broke out, "Mamma, if you won't let me talk, take off my shoes, so I can work my toes."

"PAT, you shot both barrels into a regular jam of ducks, but I don't believe you killed many," said the hunter's companion. "O! didn't, did O!" exclaimed Pat. "Jus' look in the wather there, will yez? It's fairly alive wid dead wans!"

HUNGER is the best sauce; hence street-boys are naturally saucy. Many men, many minds; but one woman frequently has more than all of them. They who dance leave the host to pay the fiddler. What cannot be cured supports the doctors. A fair exchange would ruin the stock-market. There's many a smoke with no tobacco.

"It's not dark enough yet," she whispered, as she peered eagerly up and down the street. "There's no one in sight," he replied, after a careful survey. "But someone may come round that corner at any minute, and recognise us." "Well, then, we'll wait a bit." What dreadful deed did these two contemplate committing! He was only about to give her the first lesson in riding a bicycle.

A PARROT in a certain family was usually kept in the dining-room with the family, but during the winter was removed to the kitchen for greater warmth. When the winter was past it again made its appearance among the family, whom it amused with the new remarks it had picked up in the kitchen. On one occasion, when the bell had been rung for something, the parrot was heard remarking from his cage: "Let 'em ring again!"

A WITHERING REBUKE.—There is a certain man who is linked for life to a lady who enjoys the unenvied reputation of sadly neglecting her household duties. One evening her convivial lord returned from the lodge in a condition several degrees above the dead level of plain sobriety. "Oh, you miserable wretch!" she exclaimed, "I'm just burning up with rage." "Yer are, are you?" replied the man. "Well, Betty, thank all right. I'm glad it ain't the best-stick this time."

JOHNNY, a bright boy of six, while being dressed for school, observing his little overcoat much the worse for wear, and having more mended places than he admired, turned quickly to his mother, and asked her: "Ma, is pa rich?" "Yes, very rich, Johnny. He is worth two millions and a half." "What in, ma?" "Oh, he values you at one million, me at a million, and the baby at half a million." Johnny, after thinking a moment, said: "Ma, tell pa to sell the baby and buy us some clothes."

"SPEAKING of the difficulty foreigners experience in giving the proper accent to English," said Captain Boddan, "reminds me of the fact that when I first came hither I could not speak English, yet you cannot detect in my conversation a foreign accent." "To acquire such perfection must have taken much time," replied a lady. "Oh, yes, it required years." "Must have been young when you came to this place?" "Yes, I was very young. In fact, I was born here."

A SCHOOL-TEACHER, having occasion, a few weeks since, to punish one of his pupils for some misdeemeanour, placed him on the platform to wait until he had heard some clauses recite; but the culprit took advantage of the teacher's engagement and escaped from the school-house. The teacher, being somewhat vexed, promised another scholar a reward of one shilling if he would bring the runaway back to the school-house. Before this could be accomplished, however, the boy who had escaped heard of the offered reward, and sent word to the teacher that he would "return and take the licking for sixpence—cash down."

A GENTLEMAN, a short time ago, was a passenger on board a steamer plying between the fashionable watering place of Blackpool and Southport. Feeling rather lonely and wishing to engage in conversation with someone, he approached one of the sailors and said to him: "We have a very smooth sea this morning, it is like a sheet of glass. You don't always have it like this." "No, sir," was the answer, "but you see as how they knowed as you were coming to-day, so the authorities at Blackpool telephoned to the Corporation at Southport, and they at once ordered out the steam-roller and rolled the sea down for the occasion. That is how it is so smooth." The gentleman retired to the end of the vessel and was some time before he recovered himself.

SOCIETY.

THE Princess of Wales and her daughters will, according to present arrangements, go to Denmark for Easter and attend the wedding of her niece, Princess Louise of Denmark.

THE Duke and Duchess of York are to visit Lancaster during the last week in this month for the purpose of opening the new Infirmary. The arrangements for the visit have not yet been definitely fixed; but it is understood that the Duke and Duchess will be the guests of Lord and Lady Derby at Knowsley Park during their stay in Lancashire.

EXTENSIVE alterations and improvements are to be carried out by the Queen in Whippingham Church. The windows are to be filled with stained glass, and the Osborne household pew is to be converted into a memorial chapel. Prince Henry's tomb is to be most elaborately decorated, and part of the work will be designed by Princess Louise. The tomb is to be covered with a recumbent statue of the late Prince, similar to the one of the lamented Prince Consort in the Albert Memorial Chapel at Windsor.

It is expected that the Queen will now go from Windsor to Osborne on May 22nd, the usual spring visit to Balmoral being given up. In that case the Court will reside at Osborne until after Ascot race week, and is then to return to Windsor for a month, after which the Queen will go to Balmoral until the beginning of November. This arrangement would cause the Court to be away from Osborne during the Cowes regatta week. The Queen, being in deep mourning, will prefer to be in Scotland during the Solent season. This would be a return to the Court routine which prevailed when Prince Albert was alive, except that then the annual sojourn at Balmoral never exceeded two months.

At the coming Coburg wedding Princess Beatrice will be greatly misused, for she has been her mother's acting manageress for so many years. In Germany the Princess takes but a minor rank by marriage, and is even preceded by her niece, Princess Victoria of Hesse, the wife of Prince Louis of Battenberg. She has never failed, however, to be recognised as Queen Victoria's favourite daughter, the one who understands how everything must be done to suit Her Majesty.

THE Emperor William is to meet the Queen at Coburg, and the Empress Frederick will also be present at the wedding. In addition to the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse, the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Roumania, Prince and Princess Philip of Saxe-Coburg Koburg, Prince and Princess Adolphus of Schaumburg-Lippe, and Prince and Princess Frederick Charles of Hesse. The Emperor and Empress of Russia are to be represented by the Grand Duke Serge Alexandrovitch and the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna.

THE inhabitants of the Isle of Wight have shown a desire to appoint the Princess Henry of Battenberg to the Governorship of the island, in succession to her late husband. It is a purely honorary appointment, without duties and without emolument, so that her Royal Highness might perfectly well accept the position if it so pleased her. The appointment, moreover, would not be without precedent, as for ten years, from 1283 to 1293, Isabella de Fortibus reigned over the island as a feudal chief, before ceding it to the Crown for a sum of about £60,000. It is thought possible that the Princess may acquiesce in the suggestion, if only to hold the office in trust, as it were, for her eldest son, Prince Alexander, until such time as he himself would be eligible for the post.

THE Emperor and Empress of Russia have sent a special invitation to the Prince and Princess of Wales to their Coronation in May next. The date of the Coronation has not yet been definitely fixed, but Thursday, May 21st, is the day which has been mentioned for the ceremony, and it will probably be selected, being the feast of St. Nicholas. If it is found to be impossible for the Prince and Princess of Wales to go to Russia, then the Queen will be represented by the Duke of Connaught.

STATISTICS.

ROLLS of paper 7 feet wide and 14 miles long have been made, the completed roll weighing over 2,600 pounds.

LONDON contains a quarter of a million working single women, whose individual earnings do not average more than 1s. per day.

THE people of Great Britain consume less tobacco per head than those of any other civilized country—only twenty three ounces to the inhabitant.

To the average eye not more than 5,000 stars are visible; some persons having extraordinarily strong eyes can see about 8,000 stars. Through the Lick telescope and other powerful instruments about 5,000,000 stars are visible. There are believed to be stars in existence beyond the reach of any telescope yet constructed.

GEMS.

WHATEVER is pure is also simple.

MERIT has rarely risen of itself, but a pebble or a twig is often quite sufficient for it to spring from to the highest ascent.

NATURE will not give to any man her highest rewards except on the condition of the highest use of a capable intellect.

ONE who is never busy can never enjoy rest; for it implies a relief from precious labour; and if our whole time were spent in amusing ourselves we should find it more wearisome than the hardest day's work.

THERE is proper pride that is commendable, and which is the offspring and the safeguard of self-respect. We should avoid haughtiness, arrogance, and presumption, but we may and should harbour a proper degree of pride—a pride based upon self-respect, and which prompts us to endeavour to preserve it.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

OATMEAL GRIDDLE CAKES.—Two cups of well-cooked oatmeal, two cups of milk, one egg, well beaten, salt to taste, about one cup of flour, or enough to make stiff enough to turn well, with an even teaspoonful of baking powder. These are very delicate.

FRIED CELERY.—Take a bunch of celery, pare off the green stalks, trim the roots and boil in slightly salted water with a little butter. Drain on a cloth, season with salt and pepper, dip in a batter, and fry pretty crisp in plenty of very hot fat. Drain and serve with tomato sauce.

ONE EGG CAKE.—Sift in two heaping cups of flour, three teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Rub two rounding tablespoonfuls of butter into a heaping cup of sugar, add a beaten egg, a pinch of salt and one cup of milk. To make a marble cake reserve a part of the batter and make it dark with spices, and lay it in spoonfuls on the light part.

STOUT JOHNNY CAKE.—One large cup chopped suet, one-half cup molasses, one cup sour milk, one teaspoonful soda, one-half cup flour, one and one-half cups Indian meal, salt. Judgment will be needed in measuring the meal, yellow requiring more than white, as it does not swell as much. The batter should be rather thick. Bake in a shallow tin about half an hour.

POTATO YEAST.—Two large or three medium sized potatoes grated; add two tablespoonfuls flour, two tablespoonfuls sugar, and same of salt. Pour on boiling water, and stir until it thickens like very thick starch; cook on stove a few minutes, stirring all the time. When cold add one compressed yeast cake, dissolved in a little water.



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MISCELLANEOUS.

POLO on tricycles is the latest Paris novelty in sports.

OPALS, when first taken from the mines, are so soft that they can be picked to pieces by the finger-nail.

ASBESTOS towels are among the curiosities of the day. When dirty it is only necessary to throw them into a red-hot fire, and after a few minutes draw them out fresh and clean.

THE first known coin is Chinese. It is copper, and specimens weighing from 1 lb. to 5 lb., and supposed to date from a period of at least one thousand years before Christ, are still in existence.

Down to the depth of 200 fathoms, where daylight appears, the eyes of a fish get bigger and bigger. Beyond that depth small-eyed forms set in, with long feelers developed to supplement the eyes.

FRENCH "paste," from which artificial diamonds are made, is composed of a mixture of glass and oxide of lead. Rubies, pearls and sapphires are also successfully imitated by the Parisians.

AN experiment is being tried this winter in the streets of Paris in providing warmth and shelter for the poor. In all but the richer quarters there are awnings, under which enormous braziers will be kept constantly burning.

MANY experiments have been made with prepared fuel pressed into bricks, but they have not been a pronounced success. The trouble is said to be owing to the coarseness of the particles. A new and practical process grinds the material into almost dust-like fineness. It is then mixed with pitch, coal-tar and other ingredients and heated and compressed into cakes sufficiently hard to bear transportation, to burn with the utmost freedom, to be uninjured by wet and much more manageable in every way than ordinary coal. It is also dustless, which is a great point, especially for household use.

A CONTRIVANCE for quickly stopping machinery—in case some person is being drawn between the cogs and rollers—has been devised by a French electrician. On touching one of a series of push buttons placed at convenient points the power is shut off and a powerful brake applied to fly-wheels. A twenty-horse-power engine, working at ninety revolutions, was stopped in two-thirds of a second.

THE Amazon is in every respect but length the greatest river in the world. At many points in its lower course so vast is its width that one shore is invisible from the other, the observer seeming to look out into a rolling sea of turbid water. It has over 400 tributaries, great and small, which rise in so many different climates that when one set is at flood height the others are at ebb, and vice versa, so that the bulk of the great river remains unchanged the whole year round.

ONE of the schemes for future engineers to work at will be the sinking of a shaft 12,000 ft. or 15,000 ft. into the earth, for the purpose of utilising the central heat of the globe. It is said that such a depth is by no means impossible, with the improved machinery and advanced methods of the coming engineer. Water at a temperature of 200 deg. Centigrade, which can, it is stated, be obtained from these deep borings, would not only heat houses and public buildings, but would furnish power that could be utilised for many purposes.

THE regions of the Little Colorado River in Arizona abound in wonderful vegetable petrifications, whole forests being found in some places which are hard as flint, but which look as if but recently stripped of their foliage. Some of these stone trees are standing just as natural as life, while others are piled across each other just like the fallen monarchs of a real wood forest. Geologists say that these stone trees were once covered to the depth of 1,000 ft. with marl, which transformed them from wood to solid rock. The marl, after the lapse of ages, washed out, leaving some of the trees standing in an upright position. The majority of them, however, are piled helter skelter in all directions, thousands of logs being sometimes piled up on an acre of ground.

EXTREME cold increases the tenacity of pure metals and alloys, and the higher the melting point of metal the stronger it is likely to be. This is accounted for by the statement that metals with high melting points must necessarily be coherent and tenacious. Metals are composed of molecules, and high-melting-point metals require an enormous amount of heat to drive the molecules apart.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

P. W.—Addresses never given.

JILL—It will be paid to her at due dates.

DURIOUS—They should have given notice.

EMOKEK—Certainly, if you could prove both.

PUNCH—Beauchamp is pronounced Beecham.

UNRELEIVING—Vienna dentists fill teeth with melted glass.

MONA—You had better ask the clergyman of your parish.

ROGER—It is a word made up from the Greek, signifying "smokes bating."

CURIOUS—The word "Dad" is pure Welsh, and means father.

FRED—Soldiers on furlough are not allowed to wear civilian clothes.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW—The first and last in Scripture, the second one of Shakespeare's plays.

KATT—Do not keep your canary birds too warm. If they fail to sing well, try them in a cooler place.

YOUNG WINE—You can buy it as cheap and better than you could make it.

PHIL—You acted most dishonestly, and you must take the consequences.

INQUIRER—Gallon was originally a pitcher or jar, no matter of what size.

LOUSYMANUS—The red colour of bricks is due to the iron in the clay.

A NEW WOMAN—It is wholly beyond our power to say what offices employ feminine labour.

RACHEL—Burnt cork and a little pomatum will darken and besow a gloss.

ARTIST—The love of literature often goes hand-in-hand with the love of art.

HARLEQUIN—Any work on pantomime will impart information in regard to details.

RED HERRING—Salt fish are most quickly and best freshened by soaking in sour milk.

ANTIQUARY—Stonehenge, in Wiltshire, is our chief existing monument of ante-Roman antiquity.

MOIRA—A lump of camphor amongst your clothes will keep moths away.

M. G.—The accession of Queen Victoria to the throne of England took place on the 20th of June, 1837.

MILK—Rub with a mixture of stale breadcrumbs and starch, using a pad of stale breadcrumb.

J. E.—The value is exactly what any purchaser will give; there is no fixed price for old coins.

FAINT—It is not good form to dance with a man to whom you have not been introduced.

W. E.—Lord Outhbert Collingwood was second in command at Trafalgar, October 21st, 1805, when Nelson fell.

AN OLD READER—Whatever you determine to do, do it at once, and apply all your industry to the undertaking you have begun.

BEILE—Long gloves with fan and very fine small handkerchiefs will finish a toilet that should be extremely becoming.

T. L. T.—The largest dome in the world is that of the Lutheran Church, at Warsaw, Russia. The interior diameter is two hundred feet.

PACIFICATIO VEO—The question of paying fares for ladies depends entirely upon circumstances. As a rule, it should not be permitted.

DEBUTANTE—When asked to dance, a simple inclination of the head is all that is required; you then rise and take your place.

ANXIOUS LOVER—A person must be worse than a fool who is desirous of wedding a woman when he knows that her affections are elsewhere engaged.

SWEET SAVENTERY—"Coming out" means the period that a young lady is introduced to the world; when she has completed her education and enters into society.

X. Y. Z.—While it is not arbitrary that you give a roman, one is usually asked. Of course, you can decline to answer if you choose.

BRITISHER—Peers wear their robes and coronets on grand occasions, but do not sit in them whilst transacting ordinary business in the House of Lords.

DISCOMFORT—The amount depends on the situation in life of both parties, the circumstances under which the promise was made and various other points.

WILL O'THE WINE—It depends upon how the leather is employed; in some cases there is nothing that will answer.

MUSICIAN—Yes; the song formed part of an opera, by Howard Payne, entitled *Clari*, and was produced at Covent Garden Theatre about the year 1820.

BEST—You might try smoking the furniture with sulphur, but that can hardly be done without injuring, to some extent, the polish upon the articles.

SUFFERER—There must be some constitutional trouble that demands a physician's examination and opinion.

TONY—You will certainly find the Dutch language useful on going to South Africa, but it is possible to get along without it quite well.

WORRIED MISTRESS—A mistress cannot deduct the value of articles accidentally broken from her servant's wages, unless a special agreement to that effect was entered into at the hiring.

LOVER OF FLOWERS—It is a matter which can be determined only by the extent of your practical knowledge of gardening; mere soil and climate are not everything.

JESTER—Henry VIII. was the first King of England who received the title of Majesty. His predecessors were usually addressed as "my liege" and "your grace."

ADONER—If you are not in a condition to marry you certainly should not show marked attentions to any girl. It is unjust to her and dishonourable on your part.

TOT—Alum in bread may be detected by heating a knife blade and thrusting it into the loaf; its presence will be shown by small specks on the blade, and a faint, peculiar odour.

JOLLY JACK—You cannot enter the American navy in any British port, and if you seek to join in a foreign roadstead or harbour you will find that only able-bodied seamen are acceptable.

AN OLD READER—Canterbury Cathedral is the largest one in England; its extreme length is 545 feet, and that of St. Paul's, London, 512 feet. Salisbury is the highest spire in England, its altitude being 404 feet.

THE WAY OF LIFE.

Some end work where some find rest,
And so the weary world goes on,
I sometimes wonder which is best,
The answer comes when life is gone.

Some eyes sleep when some eyes wake,
And so the dreary night hours go,
Some hearts beat where others break,
I often wonder why 'tis so.

Some will faint where some will fight;
Some love the tent and some the field,
I often wonder who are right—
The ones who strive or those who yield.

Some hands fold where other hands
Are lifted bravely in the strife,
And so through ages and through lands
Move on the two extremes of life.

Some feet halt where some feet tread,
In tireless march, a thorny way,
Some struggle on where some have fled;
Some seek when others shun the fray.

Some swords rust where others clash;
Some fall back where some move on;
Some flags furled where others flash,
Until the battle has been won.

Some sleep on while others keep
The vigils of the true and brave,
They will not rest till roses creep
Around their names above a grave.

R.

A MATRON—Nothing is more suitable for an evening wrap for an elderly lady than a long satin cloak in some dark shade, or even in black satin lined with a bright colour and well- edged with fur.

FIVE YEARS' READER—Use beer bottles, with rubber stoppers, which are handy and can be bought cheaply. The catchup has a good colour and fine flavour, will keep in all climates, and never turns sour.

BORIS—They sing a great deal, not only at entertainments, but also at their work in the house and in the fields, especially during harvest. The shepherds or the reapers on the opposite heights, often sing in alternation, stanza by stanza.

PATER—Really high class books for boys are not common. There are plenty that treat of all sorts of sensational subjects, but for those of live interest, combined with a high moral standard, parents and guardians are anxiously inquiring.

BEVELS—Pepper and salt to taste is frequently the only seasoning used, but another is to one pound and a quarter of meat allow one large teaspoonful of salt and half a teaspoonful of dried and sifted parsley, the same quantity of thyme, and a small teaspoonful ground black pepper.

COCHELY—Beat half a cupful of butter to a cream, with one cupful of powdered sugar, beat until very light and white, then add the unbeaten white of an egg, and beat the mixture until also very light and white, stand it over boiling water, add gradually half a cupful of boiling water, and a fourth of a cupful of sherry wine. Stir until frothy as possible, and serve immediately.

DEPRESSED—It is true that many pass through life with comparatively few ailments, and a few are scarcely sick at all. But the latter cases are exceptions to the rule of existence, and should be so regarded by those who have to undergo physical indisposition of one description or another. Take a more cheerful view of your surroundings, and look forward to a change for the better, sooner or later.

ROSE—It depends entirely on circumstances whether a young lady should inform a young man of her change of residence. If he has been a regular caller and has been received by her family, she might do so. Or, what is much better, she could ask some mutual friend to give him the address. Writing to young men with whom she is not very well acquainted is not at all wise or prudent or amiable.

ROGER—The Hindoo make a god of the monkey called *houssan*, build temples and hospitals for it, and believe that whoever kills one will die within a year. It is very sensitive to cold, and is therefore rarely seen in our menageries. Its colour is yellowish-white, with the face, forearms and hands, legs and feet, black. It appears sad and listless when at rest, but when roused is sprightly and active.

ESTEE—In addition to the generally evident ham, tongue or chicken sandwich, lettuce leaves pulled into small pieces and dipped in mayonnaises or thinly sliced cucumbers make a delicious one, then too, anchovy paste or caviare spread between the slices of bread are very appetizing. If finely chopped meat is to be used do not spread the butter on the bread, but melt it and mix with the meat and season all with Worcestershire sauce, onion juice, catsup, or any favour preferred.

HOUSEWIFE—Constant attention to cleanliness and allowing no deposit of dust to remain on top of windows, doors, picture frames, bedstead cabinets, under beds or elsewhere. A solution of camphor in spirits of wine sprinkled over the floor, and especially about the bed, is helpful, but you must wage a personal war against them yourself, searching and killing all you can. Doubtless the eggs were there, and the heat of the fire hatched them.

F. H. P.—Broil the steak for ten minutes over a clear fire, having the steak over an inch thick. Before broiling the steak, prepare the sauce. Put one tablespoonful of butter into a saucepan; when melted, add one tablespoonful of flour and half a pint of stock. When smooth and boiling, add half teaspoonful of salt, dash of pepper, tablespoonful of butter, juice of half a lemon, and a tablespoonful of anchovy paste. Pour this over the steak and serve, garnished with Duchess potatoes.

SUN ROSE—Young women who mingle much in society should be constantly on their guard against the advances of the men of whom so many of the more confiding sex complain. It is to be lamented that there is so much pretension in the world and that so many are deceived by it; but, on the other hand, there is much manly honesty and womanly rectitude to be found, and while duplicity prevails among a great many, sincerity, frankness and candour are still practised, and morality and virtue still honoured.

WORLD-WE SAILOR—There is a tiny kind of shark which, when taken into a dark apartment, presents an extraordinary spectacle. The entire surface of the head and body emits a greenish gleam that is constant, and is not, as in the case of most of these luminous inhabitants of the sea, increased by friction. The smallness of the fins of this fish show that it is not an active swimmer, and the assumption is that its light is useful in attracting its prey, on the principle of the torpedoes used by many savages in fishing.

MONOMANIAC—France is one of the best-paved countries in the world. The first Napoleon instituted and carried out a road system which gave France the roads which are lasting monuments to the Napoleonic foresight and shrewdness. These roads, always passable and reaching all the centres of population, are competitors of the railways. They are of greater value to the farmer than the railways, and have served as a means of putting the peasant farmers in communication with the market, besides increasing the value of farming land.

H. J.—Dissolve ingredients you mention in two quarts of hot water, when cold stir in as much flour as will give it the consistence of thick cream. You should blend the flour first in only a little water. The small size way work out all danger of lumps, or beat it until perfectly smooth if you prefer that method. To this add half a teaspoonful of finely-powdered resin and ten drops oil of cloves; when well mixed pour the whole into one quart of boiling water, stirring thoroughly until it is cooked. It is necessary to put it on the fire for a time with this object, but never stop stirring for a moment; then pour it into a glass earthen vessel, and when cold cover the top with oiled silk and put it in a cool place. When you need to use it, take out what you want and soften it with warm water.

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